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THE HISTORICAL CHRIST

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OR,

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE VIEWS OF MR. J. M. ROBERTSON, DR. A. DREWS, AND PROF. W. B. SMITH

BY

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PREFACE

THIS little volume was written in the spring of the year 1913, and is intended as a plea for moderation and good sense in dealing with the writings of early Christianity; just as my earlier volumes entitled *Myth, Magic, and Morals* and *A History of New Testament Criticism* were pleas for the free use, in regard to the origins of that religion, of those methods of historical research to which we have learned to subject all records of the past. It provides a middle way between traditionalism on the one hand and absurdity on the other, and as doing so will certainly be resented by the partisans of each form of excess.

The comparative method achieved its first great triumph in the field of Indo-European philology; its second in that of mythology and folk-lore. It is desirable to allow to it its full rights in the matter of Christian origins. But we must be doubly careful in this new and almost unworked region to use it with the same scrupulous care for evidence, with the same absence of prejudice and economy of hypothesis, to

which it owes its conquests in other fields. The untrained explorers whom I here criticize discover on almost every page connections in their subject-matter where there are and can be none, and as regularly miss connections where they exist. Parallelisms and analogies of rite, conduct, and belief between religious systems and cults are often due to other causes than actual contact, inter-communication, and borrowing. They may be no more than sporadic and independent manifestations of a common humanity. It is not enough, therefore, for one agent or institution or belief merely to remind us of another. Before we assert literary or traditional connection between similar elements in story and myth, we must satisfy ourselves that such communication was possible. The tale of Sancho Panza and his visions of a happy isle, over which he shall hold sway when his romantic lord and master, Don Quixote, has overcome with his good sword the world and all its evil, reminds us of the naïf demand of the sons of Zebedee (Mark x, 37) to be allowed to sit on the right hand and the left of their Lord, so soon as he is glorified. With equal simplicity (Matthew xix, 28) Jesus promises that in the day of the regeneration of Israel, when the Son of Man takes his seat on his throne of glory, Peter and his companions shall also take their seats on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. The projected

mise en scène is exactly that of a Persian great king with his magnates on their several "cushions" of state around him. There is, again, a close analogy psychologically between Dante's devout adoration of Beatrice in heaven and Paul's of the risen Jesus. These two parallels are closer than most that Mr. Robertson discovers between Christian story and Pagan myth, yet no one in his senses would ever suggest that Cervantes drew his inspiration from the Gospels or Dante from the Pauline Epistles. In criticizing the Gospels it is all the more necessary to proceed cautiously, because the obscurantists are incessantly on the watch for solecisms—or "howlers," as a schoolboy would call them; and only too anxious to point to them as of the essence of all free criticism of Christian literature and history.

Re-reading these pages after the lapse of many months since they were written, I have found little to alter, though Prof. A. C. Clark, who has been so good as to peruse them, has made a few suggestions which, where the sheets were not already printed, I have embodied. I append a list of *errata* calling for correction.

FRED. C. CONYBEARE.

March 1, 1914.

ERRATA

P. 87, first line of footnote: *for* "des as Alten" *read* "des alten."

P. 110, line 28: *for* "passages" *read* "episodes."

P. 116, line 6: *for* "At Cyprus they stay with an early disciple" *read* "They stay with an early disciple from Cyprus."

P. 147, line 5: *omit* the word "twice."

P. 151, line 9: *after* "verse 20" *add*: "But, since the Bezan omission does not cover the whole of the matter taken from Corinthians, we may suppose that Luke borrowed the words from the Epistle in question."

P. 167, in marginal lemma: *for* "of Jesus" *read* "of Jesus of."

P. 185, lines 11, 12, *read thus*: "on it (the *Didaché*) the," etc.

Chapter I

HISTORICAL METHOD

Orthodox obscurantism the parent of Sciolism

In *Myth, Magic, and Morals* (Chapter IX) I have remarked that the Church, by refusing to apply in the field of so-called sacred history the canons by which in other fields truth is discerned from falsehood, by beatifying credulous ignorance and anathematizing scholarship and common sense, has surrounded the figure of Jesus with such a nimbus of improbability that it seems not absurd to some critics of to-day to deny that he ever lived. The circumstance that both in England and in Germany the books of certain of these critics—in particular, Dr. Arthur Drews, Professor W. Benjamin Smith, and Mr. J. M. Robertson—are widely read, and welcomed by many as works of learning and authority, requires that I should criticize them rather more in detail than I deemed it necessary to do in that publication.

B. Croce on nature of History

Benedetto Croce well remarks in his *Logica* (p. 195) that history in no way differs from the physical sciences, insofar as it cannot be constructed by pure reasoning, but rests upon sight or vision of the fact that has happened, the fact so perceived being the only source of history. In a methodical historical treatise the sources are usually divided into monuments and narratives; by the former being understood whatever is left to us as a trace of the accomplished fact—*e.g.*, a contract, a letter, or a triumphal arch;

while narratives consist of such accounts of it as have been transmitted to us by those who were more or less eye-witnesses thereof, or by those who have repeated the notices or traditions furnished by eye-witnesses.

Relative paucity of evangelic tradition

Now it may be granted that we have not in the New Testament the same full and direct information about Jesus as we can derive from ancient Latin literature about Julius Cæsar or Cicero. We have no *monuments* of him, such as are the commentaries of the one or the letters and speeches of the other. It is barely credible that a single one of the New Testament writers, except perhaps St. Paul, ever set eyes on him or heard his voice. It is more than doubtful whether a single one of his utterances, as recorded in the Gospels, retains either its original form or the idiom in which it was clothed. A mass of teaching, a number of aphorisms and precepts, are attributed to him; but we know little of how they were transmitted to those who repeat them to us, and it is unlikely that we possess any one of them as it left his lips.

and presence of miracles in it,

And that is not all. In the four Gospels all sorts of incredible stories are told about him, such as that he was born of a virgin mother, unassisted by a human father; that he walked on the surface of the water; that he could foresee the future; that he stilled a storm by upbraiding it; that he raised the dead; that he himself rose in the flesh from the dead and left his tomb empty; that his apostles beheld him so risen; and that finally he disappeared behind a cloud up into the heavens.

explains and excuses the

It is natural, therefore—and there is much excuse for him—that an uneducated man or a child, bidden

unceremoniously in the name of religion to accept these tales, should revolt, and hastily make up his mind that the figure of Jesus is through and through fictitious, and that he never lived at all. One thing only is certain—namely, that insofar as the orthodox blindly accept these tales—nay, maintain with St. Athanasius that the man Jesus was God incarnate, a pre-existent æon, Word of God, Creator of all things, masked in human flesh, but retaining, so far as he chose, all his exalted prerogatives and cosmic attributes in this disguise—they put themselves out of court, and deprive themselves of any faculty of reply to the extreme negative school of critics. The latter may be very absurd, and may betray an excess of credulity in the solutions they offer of the problem of Christian origins; but they can hardly go further along the path of absurdity and credulity than the adherents of the creeds. If their arguments are to be met, if any satisfactory proof is to be advanced of the historicity of Jesus, it must come, not from those who, as Mommsen remarked, "reason in chains," but from free thinkers.

extreme negative school

Those, however, who have much acquaintance with antiquity must perceive at the outset that, if the thesis that Jesus never existed is to be admitted, then quite a number of other celebrities, less well evidenced than he, must disappear from the page of history, and be ranged with Jesus in the realm of myth.

Yet Jesus is better attested than most ancients

Many characteristically Christian documents, such as the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Teaching of the Apostles, are admitted by Drews to have been written before A.D. 100.[1] Not

Age of the earliest Christian literature

[1] Page 20 of *The Christ Myth*, from a note added in the third edition.

only the canonical Gospels, he tells us,[1] were still current in the first half of the second century, but several never accepted by the Church—*e.g.*, spurious gospels ascribed to Matthew, Thomas, Bartholomew, Peter, the Twelve Apostles. These have not reached us, though we have recovered a large fragment of the so-called Peter Gospel, and find that it at least pre-supposes canonical Mark. The phrase, "Still current in the first half of the second century," indicates that, in Dr. Drews's opinion, these derivative gospels were at least as old as year 100; in that case our canonical Gospels would fall well within the first. I will not press this point; but, anyhow, we note the admission that within about seventy years of the supposed date of Jesus's death Christians were reading that mass of written tradition about him which we call the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They were also reading a mass of less accredited biographies—less trustworthy, no doubt, but, nevertheless, the work of authors who entertained no doubt that Jesus had really lived, and who wished to embellish his story.

If Jesus never lived, neither did Solon,

If, then, armed with such early records, we are yet so exacting of evidence as to deny that Jesus, their central figure, ever lived, what shall we say of other ancient worthies—of Solon, for example, the ancient Athenian legislator? For his life our chief sources, as Grote remarks (*History of Greece*, Pt. II, ch. 11), are Plutarch and Diogenes, writers who lived seven and eight hundred years after him. Moreover, the stories of Plutarch about him are, as Grote says, "contradictory as well as apocryphal." It is true

[1] Op. cit. p. 214.

that Herodotus repeats to us the story of Solon's travels, and of the conversations he held with Crœsus, King of Lydia; but these conversations are obviously mere romance. Herodotus, too, lived not seventy, but nearly one hundred and fifty years later than Solon, so that contemporary evidence of him we have none. Plutarch preserves, no doubt, various laws and metrical aphorisms which were in his day attributed to Solon, just as the Christians attributed an extensive body of teaching to Jesus. If we deny all authenticity to Jesus's teaching, what of Solon's traditional lore? Obviously Jesus has a far larger chance to have really existed than Solon.

or Epimenides,

And the same is true of Epimenides of Crete, who was said to be the son of the nymph Balte; to have been mysteriously fed by the nymphs, since he was never seen to eat, and so forth. He was known as the Purifier, and in that *rôle* healed the Athenians of plagues physical and spiritual. A poet and prophet he lived, according to some, for one hundred and fifty-four years; according to his own countrymen, for three hundred. If he lived to the latter age, then Plato, who is the first to mention him in his *Laws*, was his contemporary, not otherwise.

or Pythagoras,

Pythagoras, again, can obviously never have lived at all, if we adopt the purist canons of Drews. For he was reputed, as Grote (Pt. II, ch. 37) reminds us, to have been inspired by the gods to reveal to men a new way of life, and found an order or brotherhood. He is barely mentioned by any writer before Plato, who flourished one hundred and fifty years later than he. In the matter of miracles, prophecy, pre-existence, mystic observances, and asceticism, Pythagoras equalled, if he did not excel, Jesus.

or Apollonius of Tyana

Apollonius of Tyana is another example. We have practically no record of him till one hundred and twenty years after his death, when the Sophist Philostratus took in hand to write his life, by his own account, with the aid of memorials left by Damis, a disciple of the sage. Apollonius, like Jesus and Pythagoras, was an incarnation of an earlier being; he, too, worked miracles, and appeared after death to an incredulous follower, and ascended into heaven bodily. The stories of his miracles of healing, of his expulsions of demons, and raising of the dead, read exactly like chapters out of the Gospels. He, like Jesus and Pythagoras, had a god Proteus for his father, and was born of a virgin. His birth was marked in the heavens by meteoric portents. His history bristles with tales closely akin to those which were soon told of Jesus; yet all sound scholars are agreed that his biographer did not imitate the Gospels, but wrote independently of them. If, then, Jesus never lived, much less can Apollonius have done so. Except for a passing reference in Lucian, Philostratus is our earliest authority for his reality; the life written of him by Moeragenes is lost, and we do not know when it was written. On the whole, the historicity of Jesus is much better attested and documented than that of Apollonius, whose story is equally full of miracles with Christ's.

Miracles do not wholly invalidate a document

The above examples suffice. But, with the aid of a good dictionary of antiquity, hundreds of others could be adduced of individuals for whose reality we have not a tithe of the evidence which we have for that of Jesus; yet no one in his senses disputes their ever having lived. We take it for certain that hundreds—nay, thousands—of people who figure on the pages

of ancient and medieval history were real, and that, roughly speaking, they performed the actions attributed to them—this although the earliest notices of them are only met with in Plutarch, or Suidas, or William of Tyre, or other writers who wrote one hundred, two hundred, perhaps six hundred years after them. Nor are we deterred from believing that they really existed by the fact that, along with some things credible, other things wholly incredible are related of them. Throughout ancient history we must learn to pick and choose. The thesis, therefore, that Jesus never lived, but was from first to last a myth, presents itself at the outset as a paradox. Still, as it is seriously advanced, it must be seriously considered; and that I now proceed to do.

Proof of the unhistoricity of Jesus, how attainable

It can obviously not pass muster, unless its authors furnish us with a satisfactory explanation of every single notice, direct or indirect, simple or constructive, which ancient writers have transmitted to us. Each notice must be separately examined, and if an evidential document be composite, every part of it. Each statement in its *primâ facie* sense must be shown to be irreconcilable with what we know of the age and circumstances to which it pretends to relate. And in every case the new interpretation must be more cogent and more probable than the old one. Jesus, the real man, must be driven line by line, verse by verse, out of the whole of the New Testament, and after that out of other early sources which directly or by implication attest his historicity. There is no other way of proving so sweeping a negative as that of the three authors I have named.

How to approach ancient documents

For every statement of fact in an ancient author is a problem, and has to be accounted for. If it accords

with the context, and the entire body of statement agrees with the best scheme we can form in our mind's eye of the epoch, we accept it, just as we would the statement of a witness standing before us in a law court. If, on the other hand, the statement does not agree with our scheme, we ask why the author made it. If he obviously believed it, then how did his error arise? If he should seem to have made it without himself believing it, then we ask, Why did he wish to deceive his reader? Sometimes the only solution we can give of the matter is, that our author himself never penned the statement, but that someone covertly inserted it in his text, so that it might appear to have contained it. In such cases we must explain why and in whose interest the text was interpolated. In all history, of course, we never get a direct observation, or intuition, or hearing of what took place, for the photographic camera and phonograph did not exist in antiquity. We must rest content with the convictions and feelings of authors, as they put them down in books. To one circumstance, however, amid so much dubiety, we shall attach supreme importance; and that is to an affirmation of the same fact by two or more independent witnesses. One man may well be in error, and report to us what never occurred; but it is in the last degree improbable that two or more independent witnesses will join forces in testifying to what never was. Let us, then, apply this principle to the problem before us. Jesus, our authors affirm, was not a real man, but an astral myth. Now we can conceive of one ancient writer mistaking such a myth for a real man; but what if another and another witness, what if half a dozen or more come along, and, meeting us quite

Value of several independent witnesses in case of Jesus

apart from one another and by different routes, often by pure accident, conspire in error. If we found ourselves in such case, would we not think we were bewitched, and take to our heels?

The oldest sources about Jesus

Well, I do not intend to take to my heels. I mean to stand up to the chimeras of Messrs. Drews, Robertson, and Benjamin Smith. And the best courage is to take one by one the ancient sources which bear witness to the man Jesus, examine and compare them, and weigh their evidence. If they are independent, if they agree, not too much—that would excite a legitimate suspicion—but only more or less and in a general way, then, I believe, any rational inquirer would allow them weight, even if none were strictly contemporaries of his and eye-witnesses of his life. In the Gospel of Mark we have the earliest narrative document of the New Testament. This is evident from the circumstance that the three other evangelists used it in the composition of their Gospels. Drews, indeed, admits it to be one of the "safest" results of modern discussion of the life of Jesus that this Gospel is the oldest of the surviving four. He is aware, of course, that this conclusion has been questioned; but no one will doubt it who has confronted Mark in parallel columns with Luke and Matthew, and noted how these other evangelists not only derive from it the order of the events of the life of Jesus, but copy it out verse after verse, each with occasional modifications of his own. Drews, however, while aware of this phenomenon, has yet not grasped the fact that it and nothing else has moved scholars to regard Mark as the most ancient of the three Synoptics; quite erroneously, as if he had never read any work of modern textual

The Gospel of Mark used in Matthew and Luke

criticism, he imagines that they are led to their conclusion, firstly by the superior freshness and vividness of Mark, by a picturesqueness which argues him to have been an eye-witness; and, secondly, by the evidence of Papias, who, it is said, declared Mark to have been the interpreter of the Apostle Peter. In point of fact, the modern critical theologians, for whom Drews has so much contempt, attach no decisive weight in this connection either to the tradition preserved by Papias or to the graphic qualities of Mark's narratives. They rest their case mainly on the internal evidence of the texts before them.

Contents of Mark

What, then, do we find in Mark's narrative?

Inasmuch as my readers can buy the book for a penny and study it for themselves, I may content myself with a very brief *résumé* of its contents.

It begins with an account of one John who preached round about Judæa, but especially on the Jordan, that the Jews must repent of their sins in order to their remission; in token whereof he directed them to take a ritual bath in the sacred waters of the Jordan, just as a modern Hindoo washes away his sins by means of a ritual bath in the River Jumna. An old document generally called Q. (Quelle), because Luke and Matthew used it in common to supplement Mark's rather meagre story, adds the reason why the Jews were to repent; and it was this, that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Drews, in his first chapter of *The Christ Myth*, traces out the idea of this Kingdom of God, which he finds so prominent in the Jewish Apocalyptics of the last century before and the first century after Christ, and attributes it to Persian and Mithraic influence. Mithras, he says, was to descend upon the earth, and in a last fierce struggle over-

Drews's account of Messianism

whelm Angromainyu or Ahriman and his hosts, and cast them down into the nether world. He would then raise the dead in bodily shape, and after a general judgment of the whole world, in which the wicked should be condemned to the punishments of hell and the good raised to heavenly glory, establish the "millennial kingdom." These ideas, he continues, penetrated Jewish thought, and brought about a complete transformation of the former belief in a messiah, a Hebrew term meaning the anointed—in Greek *Christos*. For, to begin with, the Christ was merely the Jewish king who represented Jahwe before the people, and the people before Jahwe. He was "Son of Jahwe," or "Son of God" *par excellence;* later on the name came to symbolize the ideal king to come—this when the Israelites lost their independence, and were humiliated by falling under a foreign yoke. This ideal longed-for king was to win Jahwe's favour; and by his heroic deeds, transcending those of Moses and Joshua of old, to re-establish the glory of Israel, renovate the face of the earth, and even make Israel Lord over all nations. But so far the Messiah was only a human being, a new David or descendant of David, a theocratic king, a divinely favoured prince of peace, a just ruler over the people he liberated; and in this sense Cyrus, who delivered the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, the rescuer and overlord of Israel, had been acclaimed Messiah.

At last and gradually—still under Persian influence, according to Drews—this figure assumed divine attributes, yet without forfeiting human ones. Secret and supernatural as was his nature, so should the birth of the Messiah be; though a divine child, he was to be born in lowly state. Nay, the personality of the

Messiah eventually mingled with that of Jahwe himself, whose son he was. Such, according to Drews, were the alternations of the Messiah between a human and a divine nature in Jewish apocalypses of the period B.C. 100 to A.D. 100. They obviously do not preclude the possibility of the Jews in that epoch acclaiming a man as their Messiah—indeed, there is no reason why they should not have attached the dignity to several; and from sources which Drews does not dispute we learn that they actually did so.

John and Jesus began as messengers of the divine kingdom on earth

Let us return to Mark's narrative. Among the Jews who came to John to confess and repent of their sins, and wash them away in the Jordan, was one named Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee; and he, as soon as John was imprisoned and murdered by Herod, caught up the lamp, if I may use a metaphor, which had fallen from the hands of the stricken saint, and hurried on with it to the same goal. We read that he went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe in the gospel or good tidings."

The rest of Mark is a narrative of what happened to Jesus on this self-appointed errand. We learn that he soon made many recruits, from among whom he chose a dozen as his particular missionaries or apostles. These, after no long time, he despatched on peculiar beats of their own. He was certain that the kingdom was not to be long delayed, and on occasions assured his audience that it would come in their time. When he was sending out his missionary disciples, he even expressed to them his doubts as to whether it would not come even before they had

Jesus's anticipations of its speedy advent

had time to go round the cities of Israel. It was not, however, this consideration, but the instinct of exclusiveness, which he shared with most of his race, that led him to warn them against carrying the good tidings of the impending salvation of Israel to Samaritans or Gentiles; the promises were not for schismatics and heathens, but only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Some of these details are derived not from Mark, but from the document out of which, as I remarked above, the first and second evangelists supplemented Mark.

He confined the promises to Jews

Like Luther, Loyola, Dunstan, St. Anthony, and many other famous saints and sinners, Jesus, on the threshold of his career, encountered Satan, and overthrew him. A characteristically oriental fast of forty days in the wilderness equipped him for this feat. Thenceforth he displayed, like Apollonius of Tyana and not a few contemporary rabbis, considerable familiarity with the demons of disease and madness. The sick flocked to him to be healed, and it was only in districts where people disbelieved in him and his message that his therapeutic energy met with a check. Among those who particularly flouted his pretensions were his mother and brethren, who on one occasion at least followed him in order to arrest him and put him under restraint as being beside himself or *exalté*. A good many parables are attributed to him in this Gospel, and yet more in Matthew and Luke, of which the burden usually is the near approach of the dissolution of this world and of the last Judgment, which are to usher in the Kingdom of God on earth. We learn that the parable was his favourite mode of instruction, as it always has been and still is the chosen vehicle of Semitic moral teaching. Of the

Was rejected by his own kindred

His Parables all turn on the coming Kingdom

No hint in the earliest sources of

the miraculous birth of Jesus

later legend of his supernatural birth, and of the visits before his birth of angels to Mary, his mother, and to Joseph, his putative father, of the portents subsequently related in connection with his birth at Bethlehem, there is not a word either in Mark or in the other early document out of which Matthew and Luke supplemented Mark. In these earliest documents Jesus is presented quite naturally as the son of Joseph and his wife Mary, and we learn quite incidentally the names of his brothers and sisters.

Late recognition of Jesus as himself the Messiah

Towards the middle of his career Jesus seems to have been recognized by Peter as the Son of God or Messiah. Whether he put himself forward for that *rôle* we cannot be sure; but so certain were his Apostles of the matter that two of them are represented as having asked him in the naivest way to grant them seats of honour on his left and right hand, when he should come in glory to judge the world. The Twelve expected to sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel, and this idea meets us afresh in the Apocalypse, a document which in the form we have it belongs to the years 92–93.

His hopes shattered at approach of death

But the simple faith of the Apostles in their teacher and leader was to receive a rude shock. They accompany him for the Passover to Jerusalem. An insignificant triumphal demonstration is organized for him as he enters the sacred city on an ass; he beards the priests in the temple, and scatters the money-changers who sat there to change strange coins for pilgrims. The priests, who, like many others of their kind, were much too comfortable to sigh for the end of the world, and regarded enthusiasts as nuisances, took offence, denounced him to Pilate as a rebel and a danger to the Roman government of

Judæa. He is arrested, condemned to be crucified, and as he hangs on the cross in a last moment of disillusionment utters that most pathetic of cries: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He had expected to witness the descent of the kingdom on earth, but instead thereof he is himself handed over helpless into the hands of the Gentiles.

Such in outline is the story Mark has to tell. The rival and supplementary document of which I have spoken, and which admits of some reconstruction from the text of Matthew and Luke, consisted mainly of parables and precepts which Jesus was supposed to have delivered. It need not engage our attention here.

The mythical theory of Jesus

Now the three writers I have named—Messrs. Drews, Robertson, and W. B. Smith—enjoy the singular good fortune to be the first to have discovered what the above narratives really mean, and of how they originated; and they are urgent that we should sell all we have, and purchase their pearl of wisdom. They assure us that in the Gospels we have not got any "tradition of a personality." Jesus, the central figure, never existed at all, but was a purely mythical personage. The mythical character of the Gospels, so Drews assures us, has, in the hands of Mr. J. M. Robertson, led the way, and made a considerable advance in England; he regrets that so far official learning in Germany has not taken up a serious position regarding the mythic symbolical interpretation of the latter.[1] Let us then ask, What

[1] *The Christ Myth*, p. 9. (Zu Robertson hat sie meines Wissens noch keiner Weise ernsthaft Stellung genommen, p. vii of German edition.)

is the gist of the new system of interpretation. It is as follows:—

Jesus = Joshua, a Sun-god, object of a secret cult

Jesus, or Joshua, was the name under which the expected Messiah was honoured in a certain Jewish secret society which had its headquarters in Jerusalem about the beginning of our era. In view of its secret character Drews warns us not to be too curious, nor to question either his information or that of Messrs. Smith and Robertson. This recalls to me an incident in my own experience. I was once, together with a little girl, being taken for a sail by an old sailor who had many yarns. One of the most circumstantial of them was about a ship which went down in mid ocean with all hands aboard; and it wound up with the remark: "And nobody never knew nothing about it." Little girl: "Then how did you come to hear all about it?" Like our brave old sailor, Dr. Drews warns us (p. 22) not to be too inquisitive. We must not "forget that we are dealing with a secret cult, the existence of which we can decide upon only by indirect means." His hypothesis, he tells us, "can only be rejected without more ado by such as seek the traces of the pre-Christian cult of Jesus in well-worn places, and will only allow that to be 'proved' which they have established by direct original documentary evidence before their eyes." In other words, we are to set aside our copious and almost (in Paul's case) contemporary evidence that Jesus was a real person in favour of a hypothesis which from the first and as such lacks all direct and documentary evidence, and is not amenable to any of the methods of proof recognized by sober historians. We must take Dr. Drews's word for it, and forego all evidence.

But let our authors continue with their new revela-

tion. By Joshua, or Jesus, we are not to understand the personage concerning whose exploits the Book of Joshua was composed, but a Sun-god. The Gospels are a veiled account of the sufferings and exploits of this Sun-god. "Joshua is apparently [why this qualification?] an ancient Ephraimitic god of the Sun and Fruitfulness, who stood in close relation to the Feast of the Pasch and to the custom of circumcision."[1]

Emptiness of the Sun-god Joshua hypothesis

Now no one nowadays accepts the Book of Joshua offhand as sound history. It is a compilation of older sources, which have already been sifted a good deal, and will undergo yet more sifting in the future. The question before us does not concern its historicity, but is this: Does the Book of Joshua, whether history or not, support the hypothesis that Joshua was ever regarded as God of the Sun and of Fruitfulness? Was ever such a god known of or worshipped in the tribe of Ephraim or in Israel at large? In this old Hebrew epic or saga Joshua is a man of flesh and blood. How did these gentlemen get it into their heads that he was a Sun-god? For this statement there is not a shadow of evidence. They have invented it. As he took the Israelites dryshod over the Jordan, why have they not made a River-god of him? And as, according to Drews, he was so interested in fruitfulness and foreskins, why not suppose he was a Priapic god? They are much too modest. We should at least expect "the composite myth" to include this element, inasmuch as his mystic votaries at Jeru-

[1] *Christ Myth*, p. 57. In the German text (first ed. 1909, p. 21) Mr. Robertson is the authority for this statement (so hat Robertson es sehr wahrscheinlich gemacht).

salem were far from seeing eye to eye with Paul in the matter of circumcision.

The Sun-myth stage of comparative mythology

There was years ago a stage in the Comparative History of Religions when the Sun-myth hypothesis was invoked to explain almost everything. The shirt of Nessus, for example, in which Heracles perished, was a parable of the sun setting amidst a wrack of scattered clouds. The Sun-myth was the key which fitted every lock, and was employed unsparingly by pioneers of comparative mythology like F. Max Müller and Sir George Cox. It was taken for granted that early man must have begun by deifying the great cosmic powers, by venerating Sun and Moon, the Heavens, the Mountains, the Sea, as holy and divine beings, because they, rather than humble and homelier objects, impress us moderns by their sublimity and overwhelming force. Man was supposed from the first to have felt his transitoriness, his frailty and weakness, and to have contrasted therewith the infinities of space and time, the majesty of the starry hosts of heaven, the majestic and uniform march of sun and moon, the mighty rumble of the thunder. Max Müller thought that religion began when the cowering savage was crushed by awe of nature and of her stupendous forces, by the infinite lapses of time, by the yawning abysses of space. As a matter of fact, savages do not entertain these sentiments of the dignity and majesty of nature. On the contrary, a primitive man thinks that he can impose his paltry will on the elements; that he knows how to unchain the wind, to oblige the rain to fall; that he can, like the ancient witches of Thessaly, control sun and moon and stars by all sorts of petty magical rites, incantations, and gestures, as Joshua

made the sun stand still till his band of brigands had won the battle. It is to the imagination of us moderns alone that the grandeur of the universe appeals, and it was relatively late in the history of religion—so far as it can be reconstructed from the scanty data in our possession—that the higher nature cults were developed. The gods and sacred beings of an Australian or North American native are the humble vegetables and animals which surround him, objects with which he is on a footing of equality. His totems are a duck, a hare, a kangaroo, an emu, a lizard, a grub, or a frog. In the same way, the sacred being of an early Semite's devotion was just as likely to be a pig or a hare as the sun in heaven; the cult of an early Egyptian was centred upon a crocodile, or a cat, or a dog.[1] In view of these considerations, our suspicion is aroused at the outset by finding Messrs. Drews and Robertson to be in this discarded and obsolete Sun-myth stage of speculation. They are a back number. Let us, however, examine their mythic symbolic theory a little further, and see what sort of arguments they invoke in favour of it, and what their "indirect" proofs amount to.

Examples of the Sun-god theory of Jesus. The Rock-Tomb

Why was Jesus buried in a rock-tomb? asks Mr. Robertson. Answer: Because he was Mithras, the rock-born Sun-god. We would like to know what other sort of burial was possible round Jerusalem, where soil was so scarce that everyone was buried in a rock-tomb. Scores of such tombs remain. Are they all Mithraic? Surely a score of other considerations would equally well explain the choice of a rock-tomb for him in Christian tradition.

[1] Cp. Emile Durkheim, *La Vie Religieuse*, Paris, 1912, p. 121, to whom I owe much in the text.

The date of birthday

Why was Jesus born at the winter-solstice? Answer: Because he was a Sun-god.

Our author forgets that the choice of December 25 for the feast of the physical birth of Jesus was made by the Church as late as 354 A.D. What could the cryptic Messianists of the first half of the first century know about a festival which was never heard of in Rome until the year 354, nor accepted in Jerusalem before the year 440? Time is evidently no element in the calculations of these authors; and they commit themselves to the most amazing anachronisms with the utmost insouciance, or, shall we not rather say, ignorance; unless, indeed, they imagine that the mystic worshippers of the God Joshua knew all about the date, but kept it dark in order to mystify all succeeding generations.

The twelve disciples

Why did Jesus surround himself with twelve disciples? Answer: Because they were the twelve signs of the Zodiac and he a Sun-god. We naturally ask, Were the twelve tribes of Israel equally representative of the Zodiac? In any case, may not Christian story have fixed the number of Apostles at twelve in view of the tribes being twelve? It is superfluous to go as far as the Zodiac for an explanation.

The Sermon on the Mount

Why did Jesus preach his sermon on the Mount? Answer: Because as Sun-god he had to take his stand on the "pillar of the world." In the same way, Moses, another Sun-god, gave his law from the Mount.

I always have heard that Moses got his tables of the law up top of a mountain, and brought them down to a people that were forbidden to approach it. He did not stand up top, and shout out his laws to them, as Mr. Robertson suggests. In any case, we merely read in Matthew v that Jesus went up into a

mountain or upland region, and when he had sat down his disciples came to him, and he then opened his mouth and taught them. In a country like Galilee, where you can barely walk a mile in any direction without climbing a hill, what could be more natural than for a narrator to frame such a setting for the teacher's discourse? It is the first rule of criticism to practise some economy of hypothesis, and not go roaming after fanciful and extravagant interpretations of quite commonplace and every-day occurrences.

The last Judgment

Why was it believed that Jesus was to judge men after death? Answer: Because he was a Sun-god, and *pro tanto* identical with Osiris.

Surely the more natural interpretation is that, so soon as Jesus was identified in the minds of his followers with the Messiah or Christ, the task of judging Israel was passed on to him as part of the *rôle*. Thus in the Psalms of Solomon, a Jewish apocryph of about B.C. 50, we read that the Messiah will "in the assemblies judge the peoples, the tribes of the sanctified" (xvii, 48). Such references could be multiplied; are they all Osirian? If Mr. Robertson had paid a little more attention to the later apocrypha of Judaism, and made himself a little better acquainted with the social and religious medium which gave birth to Christianity, he would have realized how unnecessary are these Sun-mythic hypotheses, and we should have been spared his books.

The Lamb and Fish symbolism

Why is Jesus represented in art and lore by the Lamb and the Fishes? Answer: As a Sun-god passing through the Zodiac.

This is amazing. We know the reason why Jesus was figured as a Lamb by the early Christians. It

was because they regarded the paschal lamb as a type of him. Does Mr. Robertson claim to know the reasons of their symbolism better than they did themselves?

And where did he discover that Jesus was represented as *Fishes* in Art and Lore? He was symbolized as one fish, not as several; and Tertullian has told us why. It was because, according to the popular zoology of the day, fishes were supposed to be born and to originate in the water, without carnal connection between their parents. For this reason the fish was taken as a symbol of Jesus, who was born again in the waters of the Jordan. A later generation explained the appellation of ἰχθυς (*ichthus*), or Fish, as an acrostic. The letters of the Greek word are the initials of the words: *Iesous Christos Theou uios soter* —*i.e.*, Jesus Christ of God Son, Saviour; but this later explanation came into vogue in an age when it was already heretical to say that Jesus was reborn in baptism; nor does it explain why the multitude of the baptized were symbolized as little fishes in contrast with the Big Fish, Christ.

The two asses

Why did Jesus ride into Jerusalem before his death on two asses? Answer: Because Dionysus also rides on an ass and a foal in one of the Greek signs of Cancer (the turning point in the sun's course). "Bacchus (p. 287) crossed a marsh on two asses."

Mr. Robertson does not attempt to prove that the earliest Christians, who were Jews, must have been familiar with the rare legend of Bacchus crossing a marsh on two asses; still less with the rare representation of the zodiacal sign Cancer as an ass and its foal. It is next to impossible; and, even if they were, what induced them to transform the myth into

the legend of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on two donkeys at once? If they had so excellent a legend of Bacchus on his asses crossing a marsh, why not be content with it? And the same question may be asked in regard to all the other transformations by which these "mystic sectaries," who formed the early Church, changed myths culled from all times and all religions and races into a connected story of Jesus, as it lies before us in the Synoptic Gospels.

Mr. Robertson disdains any critical and comparative study of the Gospels, and insists on regarding them as coeval and independent documents. Everything inside the covers of the New Testament is for him, as for the Sunday-school teacher, on one dead level of importance. All textual criticism has passed over his head. He has never learned to look in Mark for the original form of a statement which Luke or Matthew copied out, and in transferring them to their Gospels scrupled not to alter or modify. Accordingly, to suit the exigencies of his theory that the Gospels are an allegory of a Sun-god's exploits, he here claims to find the original text not in Mark, but in Matthew; as if a transcript and paraphrase could possibly be prior to, and more authoritative than, the text transcribed and *brodé*. Accordingly, he writes (p. 339) as follows: "In Mark xi and Luke xix, 30, the two asses *become* one.....In the Fourth Gospel, again, we have simply the colt." And yet by all rules of textual criticism and of common sense the underlying and original text is Mark xi, 1–7. In it the disciples merely bring a colt which they had found tied at a door. The author of the Gospel called of Matthew, eager to discern in every incident, no matter how commonplace, which

he found in Mark, a fulfilment of some prophecy, or another, drags in a tag of Zechariah: "Behold, the King cometh to thee, meek, and riding on an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." Then, to make the story told of Jesus run on all fours with the prophecy, he writes that the disciples "brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their garments, and he (Jesus) sat on them." He was unacquainted with Hebrew idiom, and so not aware that the words, "a colt the foal of an ass," are no more than a rhetorical reduplication[1] of *an ass*. There was, then, but one animal in the original form of the story, and, as the French say, it *saute aux yeux* that the importation of two is due to the influence of the prophecy on the mind of the transcriber. Why, therefore, go out of the way to attribute the tale to the influence of a legend of Bacchus, so multiplying empty hypotheses? Mr. Robertson, with hopeless perversity, takes Dr. Percy Gardner to task for repeating what he calls "the fallacious explanation, that 'an ass and the foal of

[1] Such reduplications are common in Semitic languages, and in John xix, 23, 24, we have an exact analogy with this passage of Matthew. In Psalm xxii, 19, we read: "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." Here one and the same incident is contemplated in both halves of the verse, and it is but a single garment that is divided. Now see what John makes out of this verse, regarded as a prophecy of Jesus. He pretends that the soldiers took Jesus's garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, so fulfilling the words: "They parted my garments among them." Next they took the coat without seam, and said to one another: "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be." The parallel with Matthew is exact. In each case what is mere rhetorical reduplication is interpreted of two distinct objects, and on this misinterpretation is based a fulfilment of prophecy, and out of it generated a new form of a story or a fresh story altogether. In defiance of the opinion of competent Hebraists, Mr. Robertson writes (p. 338) that "there is no other instance of such a peculiar tautology in the Old Testament." On the contrary, the Old Testament teems with them.

an ass' represents a Greek misconception of the Hebrew way of saying 'an ass,' as if Hebrews in every-day life lay under a special spell of verbal absurdity."[1] But did Hebrews in every-day life mould their ideas of the promised Messiah on out-of-the-way legends of Bacchus? Were they likely to fashion a tale of a Messianic triumph out of Gentile myths? Do we not know from a hundred sources that the Jews of that age, and the Christians who were in this matter their pupils, abhorred everything that savoured of Paganism. They were the last people in the world to construct a life of the Messiah out of the myths of Bacchus, and Hermes, and Osiris, and Heracles, and the fifty other heathen gods and heroes whom Mr. Robertson rolls up into what he calls the "composite myth" of the Gospels. But let us return to his criticism of Dr. Gardner. Why, it may be asked, was it *à priori* more absurd of Matthew to turn one ass into two in deference to Hebrew prophecy, than for Hebrews to set their Messiah riding into the holy city on two asses in deference to a myth of Bacchus crossing a marsh on two of them? Is it not Mr. Robertson, rather than Dr. Gardner, who here lies under a special spell of absurdity? "A glance at the story of Bacchus," writes Mr. Robertson, "crossing a marsh on two asses.....would have shown him that he was dealing with a zodiacal myth." The boot is on the other foot. Had Mr. Robertson chosen to glance at the *Poeticon Astronomicon* of Hyginus, a late and somewhat worthless Latin author, who is the authority for this particular tale of Bacchus, he would have read

Jewish abhorrence of Pagan myths

Robertson on Drs. Gardner and Carpenter

[1] *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 286.

(ii, 23) how Liber (*i.e.*, Dionysus) was on his way to get an oracle at Dodona which might restore his lost sanity: *Sed cum venisset ad quandam paludem magnam, quam transire non posset, de quibusdam duobus asellis obviis factis dicitur unum deprehendisse eorum, et ita esse transvectus, ut omnino aquam non tetigerit.*

In English: "But when he came to a certain spacious marsh, which he thought he could not get across, he is said to have met on the way two young asses, of which he caught one, and he was carried across on it so nicely that he never touched the water at all."

Here there is no hint of Bacchus riding on two asses, and Mr. Robertson's entire hypothesis falls to the ground like a house of cards. The astounding thing is that, although he insists on pages 287 and 453[1] that Bacchus rode on two asses, and that here is the true Babylonian explanation of Jesus also riding on two, he gets the Greek, or rather Latin, myth right on p. 339, and recognizes that Dionysus was only mounted on one of the asses when he passed the morass or river on his way to Dodona. Thus, by Mr. Robertson's own admission, Bacchus never rode on two asses at all.

The Pilate myth

Why was Jesus crucified by Pilate? For an answer to this let us for a little quit "the very stimulating and informing works," as Dr. Drews calls them, of Mr. Robertson, and turn to Dr. Drews's own work on *The Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus*.[2] For there we find the true "astral myth interpretation" in all

[1] Dr. Carpenter had objected that "It has first to be proved that Dionysos rode on two asses, as well as that Jesus is the Sun-God." Mr. Robertson complacently answers (p. 453): "My references perfectly prove the currency of the myth in question"!

[2] *The Witnesses*, p. 55 (p. 75 of German edition).

its glory. The Pilate of Christian legend was, so we learn, not originally an historical person at all; the whole story of Christ is to be taken in an astral sense; and Pilate in particular represents the story of Orion, the javelin-man (Pilatus), with the Arrow or Lance constellation (Sagitta), which is supposed to be very long in the Greek myth, and reappears in the Christian legend under the name of Longinus.....In the astral myth the Christ hanging on the cross or world-tree (*i.e.*, the Milky Way) is killed by the lance of Pilatus.....The Christian population of Rome told the legend of a javelin-man, a *Pilatus*, who was supposed to have been responsible for the death of the Saviour. Tacitus heard the myth repeated, and, like the fool he was, took it that Pilate the javelin-man was no other than Pilate the Roman procurator of Judæa under Tiberius, who must have been known to him from the books of Josephus.[1] Accordingly, Tacitus sat down and penned his account of the wholesale massacre and burning of Christians by Nero in the fifteenth book of his *Annals*.

We shall turn to the evidence of Tacitus later on. Meanwhile it is pertinent to ask where the myth of Pilatus, of which Drews here makes use, came from. The English text of Drews is somewhat confused; but presumedly Orion, with his girdle sword and lion's skin, is no other than Pilatus; and his long lance, with which he kills Christ, further entitles him to the name of Longinus. Or is it Pilatus who stabs

[1] Why necessarily from Josephus? Were not other sources of recent Roman history available for Tacitus? Here peeps out Dr. Drews's conviction that the whole of ancient literature lies before him, and that even Tacitus could have no other sources of information than Dr. Drews.

Orion? It does not matter. Let us test this hypothesis in its essential parts.

The Longinus myth

Firstly, then, Longinus was the name coined by Christian legend-mongers of the third or fourth century for the centurion who stabbed Jesus with a lance as he hung on the cross. How could so late a myth influence or form part of a tradition three centuries older than itself? The incident of the lance being plunged into the side of Jesus is related only in the Fourth Gospel, and is not found in the earlier ones. The author of that Gospel invented it in order to prove to his generation that Jesus had real blood in his body, and was not, as the Docetes maintained, a phantasm mimicking reality to the ears and eyes alone of those who saw and conversed with him. This Gospel, even according to the Christian tradition of its date, is barely earlier than A.D. 100, and the name *Longinus* was not heard of before A.D. 250 at the earliest. Yet Drews is ready to believe that it was on the lips of Christians in the reign of Nero, say in A.D. 64.

Secondly, what evidence is there that Pilatus could mean the "javelin-man" for the earliest generations of Roman Christians? The language current among them was Greek, not Latin, as the earliest Christian inscriptions in the catacombs of Rome testify. The language of Roman rites and popes remained Greek for three centuries. Why, then, should they have had their central myth of the crucifixion in a Latin form?

Thirdly, what evidence is there that Pilatus could mean a javelin-man even to a Latin? Many lexicographers interpret it in Virgil in the sense of *packed together* or *dense*, and in most authors it bears the sense of bald or despoiled.

Inadequacy of the mythic theory

But, letting that pass, we ask what evidence is there that Orion ever had the epithet Pilatus in this sense? What evidence that such a myth ever existed at all? There is none, absolutely none. It is not enough for these authors to ransack Lemprière and other dictionaries of mythology in behalf of their paradoxes; but when these collections fail them, they proceed to coin myths of their own, and pretend that they are ancient, that the early Christians believed in them, and that Tacitus fell into the trap; as if these Christians, whom they acknowledge to have been either Jews or the converts of Jews, had not been constitutionally opposed to all pagan myths and cults alike; as if a good half of the earliest Christian literature did not consist of polemics against the pagan myths, which were regarded with the bitterest scorn and abhorrence; as if it were not notorious that it was their repugnance to and ridicule of pagan gods and heroes and religious myths that earned for the Christians, as for the Jews, their teachers, the hatred and loathing of the pagan populations in whose midst they lived. And yet we are asked to believe that the Christian Church, almost before it was separated from the Jewish matrix, fashioned for itself in the form of the Gospels an allegory of a Sun-god Joshua, who, though unknown to serious Semitic scholars, is yet so well known to Mr. Robertson and his friends that he identifies him with Adonis, and Osiris, and Dionysus, and Mithras, and Krishna, and Asclepius, and with any other god or demi-god that comes to hand in Lemprière's dictionary. After hundreds of pages of such fanciful writing, Drews warns us in solemn language against the attempts "of historical theologians to reach the

nucleus of the Gospels by purely philological means." The attempt, he declares, is "*hopeless*, and must remain hopeless, because the Gospel tradition *floats in the air*." One would like to know in what medium his own hypotheses float. Like Dr. Drews, Mr. Robertson adopts the Joshua myth as if it were beyond question. His faith in "the ancient Palestinian Saviour-Sun-God" is absolute. This otherwise unknown deity was the core of what is gracefully styled "the Jesuist myth." On examination, however, the Joshua Sun-god turns out to be the most rickety of hypotheses. Because the chieftain who, in old tradition, led the Jews across the Jordan into the land of promise was named Joshua, certain critics, who are still in the sun-myth phase of comparative mythology—in particular, Stade and Winckler—have conjectured that the name Joshua conceals a solar hero worshipped locally by the tribe of Ephraim. Even if there ever existed such a cult, it had long vanished when the book of Joshua was compiled; for in this he is no longer represented as a solar hero, but has become in the popular tradition a human figure, a hero judge, and leader of the armies of Israel. Of a Joshua cult the book does not preserve any trace or memory; that it ever existed is an improbable and unverifiable hypothesis. We might just as well conjecture that Romulus, and Remus, and other half or wholly legendary figures of ancient history, were sun-gods and divine saviours. But it is particularly in Jewish history that this school is apt to revel. Moses, and Joseph, and David were all mythical beings brought down to earth; and the god David and the god Joshua, the god Moses, the god Joseph, form in the imagination of these gentlemen

Joshua the Sun-god a pure invention of the mythic school

a regular Hebrew prehistoric Pantheon. I say in their imagination, for it is certain that when the Pentateuch was compiled—at the latest in the fifth century B.C.—the Jews no longer revered David, and Joshua, and Joseph as sun-gods; while of what they worshipped even locally before that date we have little knowledge, and can form only conjectures. In any case, that they continued to worship a sun-god under the name of Joshua as late as the first century of our era must strike anyone who has the least knowledge of Hebrew religious development, who has ever read Philo or Josephus, or studied Jewish sapiential and apocalyptic literature of the period B.C. 200–A.D. 100, as a wildly improbable supposition. Sensible that their hypothesis conflicts with all we know about the Jews of these three centuries, these three authors —Messrs. Drews, Robertson, and W. B. Smith— insist on the esoterism and secrecy of the cryptic society which in Jerusalem harboured the cult. This commonest of literary tricks enables them to evade any awkward questions, and whenever they are challenged to produce some evidence of the existence of such a cult they can answer that, being secret and esoteric, it could leave little or no evidence of itself, and that we must take their *ipse dixit* and renounce all hope of direct and documentary evidence. They ask of us a greater credulity than any Pope of Rome ever demanded.

Supposed secrecy of early Christian cult a literary trick

The divine stage of Joshua, then, if it ever existed, was past and forgotten as early as 500 B.C. It has left no traces. Of the other Joshuas, who meet us in the pages of the Jewish scriptures, the most important one is Jeshua or Joshua ben Jehozadak, a high priest who, together with Zerubbabel, is often mentioned

Joshua ben Jehozadak also a Sun-god

(according to the *Encyclopædia Biblica*) in *contemporary* writings. Not only, then, have we contemporary evidence of this Joshua as of a mere man and a priest, but we know from it that he stooped to such mundane occupations as the rebuilding of the Temple. He also had human descendants, who are traced in Nehemiah xii, 10 fol. down to Jaddua. Of this epoch of Jewish history, in which the Temple was being rebuilt, we have among the Jewish and Aramaic papyri lately recovered at Elephantine documents that are autographs of personages with whom this Joshua may well have been in contact. His contemporaries are mentioned and even addressed in these documents, so that he and his circle are virtually as well evidenced for us as Frederick the Great and Voltaire. Is it credible in the face of such facts that the authors we are criticizing should turn this Joshua, too, into a solar god? Yet Drews turns with zest to the notice of this Joshua, the high priest in Zechariah iii, as "one of the many signs" which attest that "Joshua or Jesus was the name under which the expected Messiah was honoured in certain Jewish sects." Unless he regards this later Joshua also as a divine figure, and no mere man of flesh and blood, why does he thus drag him into his argument?

The suspicion that the compilers of the Old Testament burked evidence favourable to the Sun-myth hypothesis

But, after all, Messrs. Drews and Robertson are uneasy about the book of Joshua, and not altogether capable of the breezy optimism of their instructor, Mr. W. B. Smith, who, in *Ecce Deus* (p. 74), commits himself to the naïve declaration that, "even if we had no evidence whatever of a pre-Christian Jesus cult, we should be compelled to affirm its existence with undiminished decision." Accordingly, they both go out of their way to hint that the ancient Jews

suppressed the facts of the Joshua or Jesus Sun-God-Saviour cult. Thus Mr. Robertson (*Christianity and Mythology*, p. 99, note 1), after urging us to accept a late and worthless tradition about Joshua, the Son of Nave, remarks that "the Jewish books would naturally drop the subject." How ill-natured, to be sure, of the authors of the old Hebrew scriptures to suppress evidence that would have come in so handy for Mr. Robertson's speculations. Dr. Drews takes another line, and in a note draws our attention to the fact that the Samaritans possessed an apocryphal book of the same name as the canonical book of Joshua. This book, he informs us, is based upon an old work composed in the third century B.C., containing stories which in part do not appear in our Book of Joshua.

He here suggests that something was omitted in canonical Joshua by its authors which would have helped out his hypothesis of a Joshua Sun-god cult. He will not, however, find the Samaritan book encouraging, for it gives no hint of such a cult; of that anyone who does not mind being bored by a perusal of it can satisfy himself. Drews's statement that it is based on an old work composed in the third century B.C. is founded on pure ignorance, and the *Encyclopædia Biblica* declares it to be a medieval production of no value to anyone except the student of the Samaritan sect under Moslem rule.

The evidence of El Tabari about Joshua

Mr. Robertson thinks he has got on a better trail in the shape of a tradition as to Joshua which he is quite sure the old Jewish scripture writers suppressed. Let us examine it, for it affords a capital example of his ideas of what constitutes historical evidence. "Eastern tradition," he writes, "preserves a variety

of myths that the Bible-makers *for obvious reasons* suppressed or transformed." In one of those traditions "Joshua is the son of the mythical Miriam; that is to say, there was probably an ancient Palestinian Saviour-Sun-God, Jesus, the son of Mary." So on p. 285 we learn that the cult of Jesus of Nazareth was "the Survival of an ancient solar or other worship of a Babe Joshua, son of Miriam." And he continually alludes to this ancient form of devotion, not as a mere hypothesis, but as a well-ascertained and demonstrable fact.[1]

Let us then explore this remarkable tradition by which "we are led to surmise that the elucidation of the Christ myth is not yet complete." For such is the grandiose language in which he heralds his discovery. And what does it amount to? An Arab, El Tabari, who died in Bagdad about the year 925, compiled a Chronicle, of which some centuries later an unknown native of Persia made an abridgement in his own tongue, and inserted in it as a gloss "the remarkable Arab tradition," as it is called in the *Pagan Christs* (p. 157) of Mr. Robertson, albeit he acknowledges in a footnote that it is "not in the Arabic original." He asks us accordingly, on the faith of an unknown Persian glossator of the late Middle Ages, to believe that the canonical Book of Joshua originally contained this absurd tradition, and why? Because it would help out his hypothesis that

[1] On p. 299, Mary, mother of Joshua, does duty for Mary Magdalen. We there read as follows: "The friendship (of Jesus) with a 'Mary' points towards some old myth in which a Palestinian God, perhaps named Yeschu or Joshua, figures in the changing relations of lover and son towards a mythic Mary, a natural fluctuation in early theosophy." Very "natural" indeed among the Jews, who punished even adultery with death!

Jesus was an ancient Palestinian Saviour-Sun-God, worshipped by a cryptic society of Hebrews in Jerusalem, both before and after the beginning of the Christian era; and this is the man who writes about "the psychological resistance to evidence" of learned men, and sets it down to "malice and impercipience" that anyone should challenge his conclusions. As usual, Dr. Drews, who sets Mr. Robertson on a level with the author of the *Golden Bough*[1] as a "leading exponent of his new mythico-symbolical method," plunges into the pit which Mr. Robertson has dug for him, and writes that, "according to an ancient *Arabian* tradition, the mother of Joshua was called Mirzam (Mariam, Maria, as the mother of Jesus was)."

W. B. Smith's hypothesis of a God Joshua

The source from which Messrs. Drews and Robertson have drawn this particular inspiration is Dr. W. B. Smith's work, *The Pre-Christian Jesus* (*Der Vorchristliche Jesus*). This book, we are told, "first systematically set forth the case for the thesis of its title." Let us, therefore, consider its main argument. We have the following passages in Acts xviii, 24:—

> Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, a learned man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and, being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But

[1] Needless to say, Dr. Frazer, as any scholar must, rejects the thesis of the unhistoricity of Jesus with derision. Mr. Robertson, in turn, imputes his rejection of it to timidity. "He (Frazer) has had some experience in arousing conservative resistance," he writes in *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 111. He cannot realize that any learned man should differ from himself, except to curry favour with the orthodox, or from fear of them.

> when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more carefully. And when he was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him: and when he was come, he helped them much which had believed through grace: for he powerfully confuted the Jews, publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Availing ourselves of the canons of interpretation laid down by Drews and Robertson, we may paraphrase the above somewhat as follows by way of getting at its true meaning:—

"A certain sun-myth hero, as his name Apollos signifies, came to Ephesus, which, being the centre of Astarte or Aphrodite worship, was obviously the right place for such a hero to pilgrimage unto. He was mighty in the Jewish Scriptures, and had been instructed in the way of the Lord Joshua, the Sun-God-Saviour of ancient Ephraim. He spake and taught carefully the things concerning this Joshua (or Adonis, or Osiris, or Dionysus, or Vegetation-god, or Horus—for you can take your choice among these and many more). But he knew only of the prehistoric ritual of baptism of Cadmus or of Oannes-Ea, the ancient culture-god of the Babylonians, who appeared in the form of a Fish-man, teaching men by day and at night going down into the sea—in his capacity of Sun-god." This Cadmus or Oannes was worshipped at Jerusalem in the cryptic sect of the *Christists* or *Jesuists* under the name of John. His friend Apollos, the solar demi-god, began to speak boldly in the synagogue. Priscilla (presumably Cybele, mother of the gods), and Aquila, the Eagle-God, or Jupiter, heard him; she took him forthwith and

expounded to him the way of Jahve, who also was identical with Joshua, the Sun-god, with Osiris, etc.

His forced and far-fetched interpretations of common phrases

Professor W. B. Smith is a little more modest and less thorough-going in his application of mythico-symbolic methods. He only asks us to believe that the trite and hackneyed phrase, "the things concerning Jesus," refers not, as the context requires, to the history and passion of Jesus of Galilee, but to the mysteries of a prehistoric Saviour-God of the same name. We advisedly say *prehistoric*, for he was never mentioned by anyone before Professor Smith discovered him. The name Jesus, according to him, means what the word Essene also meant, a *Healer*.[1] Note, in passing, that this etymology is wholly false, and rests on the authority of a writer so late, ignorant, and superstitious as Epiphanius. Now, why cannot the words, "the things about Jesus," in this context mean the tradition of the ministry of Jesus as it had shaped itself at that time, beginning with the Baptism and ending with the Ascension, as we read in Acts i, 22? It cannot, argues Professor Smith, because Apollos only knew the baptism of John. The reference to John's baptism may be obscure, as much in early Christianity is bound to be obscure, except to Professor Smith and his imitators. Yet this much is clear, that it here means, what it means in the sequel, the baptism of mere repentance as opposed to the baptism of the Spirit, which was by laying on of hands, and con-

Apollos and the Baptism of John

[1] I could have given Professor Smith a better tip. Philo composed a glossary of Biblical and other names with their meanings, which, though lost in Greek, survives in an old Armenian version. In this Essene is equated with "silence." What a magnificent aid to Professor Smith's faith! For if Essene meant "a silent one," then the pre-Christian Nazarenes must surely have been an esoteric and secret sect.

ferred the charismatic gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Marcionites, and after them the Manichean and Cathar sects, retained the latter rite, and termed it Spiritual or Pneumatic Baptism; while they dropped as superfluous the Johannine baptism with water. It would appear, then, that Apollos was perfectly acquainted with the personal history of Jesus, and understood the purport of the baptism of repentance as a sacrament preparing followers of Jesus for the kingdom of Heaven, soon to be inaugurated on earth. Perhaps we get a glimpse in this passage of an age when the mission of Jesus in his primitive *rôle* as herald of the Messianic kingdom and a mere continuer of John's mission was familiar to many who yet did not recognize him as the Messiah. For, after instruction by Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos set himself to confute the Jews who denied Jesus to have been Messiah, which, as a mere herald of the approaching kingdom of God, he was not. We know that Paul regarded him as having attained that dignity only through, and by, the fact of the Spirit having raised him from the dead; and did not regard him as having received it through the descent of the Spirit on him in the Jordan, as the oriental Christians presently believed. Still less did Paul know of the later teaching of the orthodox churches—viz., that the Annunciation was the critical moment in which Christ became Jesus. In any case, we must not interpret the words, "the things about Jesus," in this passage in a forced and unnatural sense wholly alien to the writer of Acts. This writer again and again recapitulates the leading facts of the life and ministry of Jesus, and the phrase, "the things concerning Jesus," cannot in any work of his bear any

other sense. Moreover, the same author uses the very same phrase elsewhere (Luke xxiv, 19) in the same sense. Here Cleopas asks Jesus (whom he had failed to recognize), and says:—

> Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem, and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto him, What things? And they said unto him, *the things concerning Jesus* of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.

Such, then, were "the things about Jesus," and to find in them, as Professor W. B. Smith does, an allusion to a pre-Christian myth of a God Joshua is to find a gigantic mare's-nest, and fly in the face of all the evidence. He verges on actual absurdity when he sees the same allusion in Mark v, 26, where a sick woman, having heard "the things concerning Jesus," went behind him, touched his garment, and was healed. Her disease was of a hysterical description, and in the annals of faith-healing such cures are common. What she had heard of was obviously not his fame as a Sun-god, but his power to heal sick persons like herself. Professor Smith tries to find support for his hardy conjecture in a chance phrase in a magical papyrus of Paris, No. 3,009, edited first by Wessely, and later by Dieterich in his *Abraxas*, p. 138. It is a form of exorcism to be inscribed on a tin plate and hung round the neck of a person possessed by a devil, or repeated over him by an exorcist. In this rigmarole the giants, of course, are dragged in, and the Tower of Babel and King Solomon; and the name of Jesus, the God of the Hebrews, is also invoked in the following terms: "I

Magical papyrus of Wessely

adjure thee by Jesus the God of the Hebrews, Iabaiae Abraoth aia thoth ele, elô," etc. The age of this papyrus is unknown; but Wessely puts it in the third century after Christ, while Dieterich shows that it can in no case be older than the second century B.C. It is clearly the composition of some exorcist who clung on to the skirts of late Judaism, for he is at pains to inform us in its last line that it is a Hebrew composition and preserved among pure men. In that age, as in after ones, not a few exorcists, trading on the fears and sufferings of superstitious people, affected to be pure and holy; and the mention of Jesus indicates some such charlatan, who was more or less cognisant of Christianity and of the practice of Christian exorcists. He was also aware of the Jewish antecedents of Christianity, and did not distinguish clearly between the mother religion and its daughter. That is why he describes Jesus as a Hebrew God. We know from other sources that even in the earliest Christian age Gentiles used the name of Jesus in exorcisms. The author of the document styles Jesus God, just as Pliny informs us that the Christians sang hymns "to Christ as to God"—*Christo quasi deo*. How Professor Smith can imagine that this papyrus lends any colour to his thesis of a pre-Christian Jesus it is difficult to imagine.

Jesus a Nazoræan in what sense

Still less does his thesis really profit by the text of Matthew ii, 23, in which a prophecy is adduced to the effect that the Messiah should be called a Nazoræan, and this prophecy is declared to have been fulfilled in so far as Jesus was taken by his parents to live at Nazareth in Galilee.

What prophecy the evangelist had in mind is not

known. But Professor W. B. Smith jumps to the conclusion that the Christians were identical with the sect of Nazoræi mentioned in Epiphanius as going back to an age before Christ; and he appeals in confirmation of this quite gratuitous hypothesis[1] to Acts xxiv, 5, where the following of Jesus is described as that of the Nazoræi. It in no way helps the thesis of the non-historicity of Jesus, even if he and his followers were members of this obscure sect; it would rather prove the opposite. Drews, following W. B. Smith, pretends in the teeth of the texts that the name is applied to Jesus only as Guardian of the World, Protector and Deliverer of men from the power of sins and dæmons, and that it has no reference to an obscure and entirely unknown village named Nazareth. He also opines that Jesus was called a Nazarene, because he was the promised Netzer or Zemah who makes all things new, and so forth. Such talk is all in the air. Why these writers boggle so much at the name *Nazoræan* is not

[1] Of course, it is possible that Jesus, before he comes on the scene, at about the age of thirty, as a follower of John the Baptist, had been a member of the Essene sect, as the learned writer of the article on Jesus in the *Jewish Encyclopædia* supposes. If such a sect of Nazoræi, as Epiphanius describes, ever really existed—and Epiphanius is an unreliable author—then Jesus *may* have been a member of it. But it is a long way from a *may* to a *must*. Even if it could be proved that Matthew had such a tradition when he wrote, the proof would not diminish one whit the absurdity of Professor Smith's contention that he was a myth and a mere symbol of a God Joshua worshipped by pre-Christian Nazoræi. The Nazoræi of Epiphanius were a Christian sect, akin to, if not identical with, the Ebionites; and the hypothesis that they kept up among themselves a secret cult of a God Joshua is as senseless as it is baseless, and opposed to all we know of them. In what sense Matthew, that is to say the anonymous compiler of the first Gospel, understood *nazoræus* is clear to anyone who will take the trouble to read Matthew ii, 23. He understood by it "a man who lived in the village called Nazareth," and that is the sense which Nazarene (used interchangeably with it) also bears in the Gospel. Mr. Smith scents enigmas everywhere.

easy to divine; still less to understand what Professor Smith is driving at when he writes of those whom he calls "historicists," that "They have rightly felt that the fall of Nazareth is the fall of historicism itself." Professor Burkitt has suggested that Nazareth is Chorazin spelt backwards. Wellhausen explains *Nazorœan* from *Nesar* in the name Gennessaret. In any case, as we have no first-century gazetteer or ordnance survey of Galilee, it is rash to suppose that there could have been no town there of the name. True the Talmuds and the Old Testament do not name it; but they do not profess to give a catalogue of all the places in Galilee, so their silence counts for little.[1] All we know for certain is that for the evangelist Nazoræan meant a dweller in Nazareth, and that he gave the word that sense when he met with it in an anonymous prophecy.

Mr. Robertson on myths

I feel that I ought almost to apologize to my readers for investigating at such length the hypothesis of a pre-Christian Jesus, son of a mythical Mary, and for exhibiting over so many pages its fantastic, baseless, and absurd character. But Mr. Robertson himself warns us of the necessity of showing no mercy to myths when they assume the garb of fact. For he adduces (p. 126) the William Tell myth by way of illustrating once for all "the fashion in which a fiction can even in a historical

[1] How treacherous the *argumentum a silentio* may be I can exemplify. My name and address were recently omitted for two years running from the Oxford directory, yet my house is not one of the smallest in the city. If any future publicist should pry into my life with the aid of this publication, he will certainly infer that I was not living in Oxford during those two years. And yet the Argument from Silence is only valid where we have a directory or gazetteer or carefully compiled list of names and addresses.

period find general acceptance." Even so it is with his own fictions. We see them making their way with such startling rapidity over England and Germany as almost to make one despair of this age of popular enlightenment. It is not his fault, and I exonerate him from blame. For centuries orthodox theologians have been trying to get out of the Gospels supernaturalist conclusions which were never in them, nor could with any colour be derived from them except by deliberately ignoring the canons of evidence and the historical methods freely employed in the study of all other ancient monuments and narratives. They have set the example of treating the early writings of Christianity as no other ancient books would be treated. Mr. Robertson is humbly following in their steps, but *à rebours*, or in an inverse sense. They insist on getting more out of the New Testament than any historical testimony could ever furnish; he on getting less. In other respects also he imitates their methods. Thus they insist on regarding the New Testament, and in particular the four Gospels, as a homogeneous block, and will not hear of the criticism which discerns in them literary development, which detects earlier and later *couches* of tradition and narrative. This is what I call the Sunday-school attitude, and it lacks all perspective and orientation. Mr. Robertson imbibed it in childhood, and has never been able to throw it off. For him there is no before and after in the formation of these books, no earlier and later in the emergence of beliefs about Jesus, no stratification of documents or of ideas. If he sometimes admits it, he withdraws the admission on the next page, as militating against his cardinal hypothesis. He seems never to have submitted himself

His methods those of old-fashioned orthodoxy

to systematic training in the methods of historical research—never, as we say, to have gone through the mill; and accordingly in the handling of documents he shows himself a mere wilful child.

Thus he insists on the priority in Christian tradition of the Virgin Birth legend

His treatment of the legend of the Virgin Birth is an example of this mental attitude, which might be described as orthodoxy turned upside down and inside out. The Gospel of Mark is demonstrably older than those of the other two synoptists who merely copied it out with such variations, additions, omissions, and modifications as a growing reverence for Jesus the Messiah imposed. It contains, no more than the Pauline Epistles and the Johannine Gospel, any hint of the supernatural birth of Jesus. It regards him quite simply and naturally as the son of Joseph and Mary. In it the neighbours of Jesus enumerate by way of contumely the names of his brothers and sisters. I have shown also in my *Myth, Magic, and Morals* that this naturalist tradition of his birth dominates no less the whole of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke apart from the first two chapters of each, and that even in the first chapter of Matthew the pedigree in early texts ended with the words "Joseph begat Jesus." I have shown furthermore that the belief in the paternity of Joseph was the characteristic belief of the Palestinian Christians for over two centuries, that it prevailed in Syria to the extent of regarding Jesus and Thomas as twin brothers. I have pointed out that the Jewish interlocutor Trypho in Justin Martyr's dialogue (c. 150) maintains that Jesus was born a man of men and rejects the Virgin Birth legend as a novelty unworthy of monotheists, and that he extorts from his Christian antagonist the admission that the great majority

of Christians still believed in the paternity of Joseph.

His exceptional treatment of Christian tradition

Now Mr. Robertson evidently reads a good deal, and must at one time or another have come across all these facts. Why, then, does he go out of his way to ignore them, and, in common with Professors Drews and W. B. Smith, insist that the miraculous tradition of Jesus's birth was coeval with the earliest Christianity and prior to the tradition of a natural birth? Yet the texts stare him in the face and confute him. Why does he shut his eyes to them, and gibe perpetually at the critical students who attach weight to them? The works of all the three writers are tirades against the critical method which tries to disengage in the traditions of Jesus the true from the false, fact from myth, and to show how, in the pagan society which, as it were, lifted Jesus up out of his Jewish cradle, these myths inevitably gathered round his figure, as mists at midday thicken around a mountain crest.

In secular history he uses other canons and methods,

Their insistence that in the case of Christian origins the miraculous and the non-miraculous form a solid block of impenetrable myth is all the more remarkable, because in secular history they are prepared, nay anxious, for the separation of truth from falsehood, of history from myth, and continually urge not only its possibility, but its necessity. Mr. Robertson in particular prides himself on meting out to Apollonius of Tyana a measure which he refuses to Jesus the Messiah. "The simple purport," he writes in the *Literary Guide*, May 1, 1913, "of my chapter on Apollonius was to acknowledge his historicity, despite the accretions of myth and more or less palpable fiction to his biography." And yet

e.g., in criticizing the story of Apollonius

there are ten testimonies to the historicity of Jesus where there is one to that of Apollonius; yet Apollonius was reputed to have been born miraculously, and his birth accompanied by the portent of a meteor from heaven, as that of Jesus by a star from the east. Like Jesus, he controlled the devils of madness and disease, and by the power of his exorcisms dismissed them to be tortured in hell. Like Peter, he miraculously freed himself from his bonds; like Jesus, he revealed himself after death to a sceptical disciple and *viva voce* convinced him of his ascent to heaven; like him, he ascended in his body up to heaven amid the hymns of maiden worshippers. In life he spent seven days in the bowels of the earth, and gathered a band of disciples around him who acclaimed him as a divine being; long after his death temples were raised to him as to a demigod, miracles wrought by his relics, and prayer and sacrifice offered to his genius. So considerable was the parallelism between his story and that of Jesus that the pagan enemies of the Christians began about the year 300 to run his cult against theirs, and it was only yesterday that the orthodox began to give up the old view that the Life of Apollonius was a blasphemous *réchauffé* of the Gospels. "There is no great reason to doubt that India was visited by Apollonius of Tyana," writes Mr. Robertson (*Christianity and Mythology*, p. 273); and yet his visit in the only relation we have of it is a tissue of marvels and prodigies, his Indian itinerary is impossible, and full of contradictions not only of what we know of Indian geography to-day, but of what was already known in that day. Yet about his pilgrimage thither, declares Mr. Robertson, there is no more uncertainty than about the embassies

sent by Porus to Augustus, and by the king of "Taprobane" to Claudius. "There is much myth," he writes again, p. 280, "in the life of Apollonius of Tyana, who appears to be at the bottom a real historical personage." In the Gospels we have the story of Jairus's daughter being raised to life from apparent death. "A closely similar story is found in Philostratus's Life of Apollonius of Tyana, the girl in each case being spoken of in such a way as to leave open the question of her having been dead or a cataleptic." So writes Mr. Robertson, p. 334, who thinks that "the simple form preserved in Matthew suggests the derivation from the story in Philostratus," overlooking here, as elsewhere, the chronological difficulties. We can forgive him for that; but why, we must ask, does the presence of such stories in the Gospel irrevocably condemn Jesus to non-historicity, while their presence in the Life of Apollonius leaves his historical reality intact and unchallenged? Is it not that the application of his canons of interpretation to Apollonius would have deprived him of one of the sources from which the mythicity of Jesus by his anachronistic methods could be deduced?

The early passion play of the Sun-god Joshua

Mr. Robertson endeavours in a halting manner to justify his partiality for Apollonius. "We have," he writes (*Pagan Christs*, p. 283, § 16), "no reason for doubting that there was an Apollonius of Tyana. .....The reasons for not doubting are (1) that there was no cause to be served by a sheer fabrication; and (2) that it was a much easier matter to take a known name as a nucleus for a mass of marvels and theosophic teachings than to build it up, as the phrase goes about the canon, 'round a hole.' The

difference between such a case and those of Jesuism and Buddhism is obvious. In those cases there was a cultus and an organization to be accounted for, and a biography of the founder had to be forthcoming. In the case of Apollonius, despite the string of marvels attached to his name, there was no cultus."

Let us examine the above argument. In the case of "Jesuism" (Mr. Robertson's *argot* for early Christianity) there had to be fabricated a biography of Jesus, because there existed an organized sect that worshipped Jesus.

The organized sect consisted, according to Mr. Robertson, of "Christists" or "Jesuists," and the chief incident for which they were organized was an annual play in which the God Jesus was betrayed, arrested, condemned, was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again. Ober Ammergau has supplied him with his main conception, and his annually recurring "Gospel mystery play," as he imagines it to have been acted by the "Jesuists," who were immediate ancestors of the Christians, is a faithful copy of the modern Passion Play. He supposes it to have been acted annually because the hypothetical Sun-God-Saviour Joshua, whose mythical sufferings and death it commemorated, was an analogue of Osiris, whose sufferings and death were similarly represented in Egypt each recurring spring; also of Adonis, of Dionysus, of Mithras, and of sundry vegetation gods, annually slain to revive vegetation and secure the life of the initiate in the next world. Be it remarked also that the annually slain God of the Jesuists was not only an analogue of these other gods, but a "composite myth" made up of their myths. As we have seen, Mr. Robertson is ready to exhibit to us in

one or another of their mythologies the original of every single incident and actor in the Jesuist play.

Such was the cultus and organization which, according to Mr. Robertson and his imitator Dr. Drews, lies behind the Christian religion. The latter began to be when the "Jesuist" cult, having broken away from Judaism, was also concerned to break away from the paganism in contact with which the play would first arise.

The Gospels a transcript of this play

A biography of the Founder of the cult was now called for, by the Founder oddly enough being meant the God himself, and not the hierophant who instituted the play. The Christian Gospels are the biography in question. They are a transcript of the annually performed ritual drama, just as Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* are transcripts of Shakespeare's plays.

The first performances of the play, we learn, probably took place in Egypt. It ceased to be acted when "it was reduced to writing as part of the gospel." How far away from Jerusalem it was that the momentous decision was taken by the sect to give up play acting and be content with the transcript Mr. Robertson "can hardly divine." He hints, however, that some of the latest representations took place in the temples built by Herod at Damascus and Jericho and in the theatres of the Greek town of Gadara. "The reduction of the play to narrative form put all the Churches on a level, and would remove a stumbling block from the way of the ascetic Christists who objected to all dramatic shows as such."

But where did the play come from? What inspired it? Mr. Robertson makes a tour round the Mediter-

ranean, and collects in Part II, Ch. I, of his *Pagan Christs* a lot of scrappy information about mock sacrifices and mystery dramas, all of them "cases and modes of modification" of actual human sacrifices that were "once normal in the Semitic world." He assumes without a tittle of proof, and against all probability, that the annual sacrifice of a king or of a king's son, whether in real or mimic, held its ground among Jews as a religious ceremony right down into our era, and was "reduced among them to ritual form, like the leading worships of the surrounding Gentile world." He fashions a new hypothesis in accordance with these earlier ones as follows:—

Joshua or Jesus slain once a year

"If in any Jewish community, or in the Jewish quarter of any Eastern city, the central figure in this rite (*i.e.*, of a mock sacrifice annually recurring of a man got up to represent a god) were customarily called Jesus Barabbas, 'Jesus the Son of the Father' —whether or not in virtue of an old cultus of a God Jesus who had died annually like Attis and Tammuz —we should have a basis for the tradition so long preserved in many MSS. of the first gospel, and at the same time a basis for the whole gospel myth of the crucifixion."

Here we have a whole string of hypotheses piled one on the other. Let us see which have any ground in fact, or cohere with what we know of the past, which are improbable and unproven.

Hypothesis of human sacrifice among Jews

That human sacrifice was once in vogue among the Jews is probable enough, and the story of the frustrated sacrifice of Isaac was no doubt both a memory and a condemnation of the old rite of sacrificing first-born children with which we are familiar in ancient Phœnicia and her colony of

Carthage. That such rites in Judæa and in Israel did not survive the Assyrian conquest of Jerusalem is certain. The latest allusion to them is in Isaiah xxx, 27–33. This passage is post-exilic indeed; but, as Dr. Cheyne remarks (*Encycl. Biblica*, art. Molech, col. 3,187): "The tone of the allusion is rather that of a writer remote from these atrocities than of a prophet in the midst of the struggle against them."

We may then assume (1) that the custom of human sacrifice disappeared among Jews centuries before our era; (2) that in the epoch 100 B.C. to 100 A.D. every Jew, no matter where he lived, would view such rites and reminiscences with horror. As a matter of fact, Philo dwells in eloquent language on the horror and abomination of them as they were still in his day sporadically celebrated, not among Jews, but among pagans.

This being so, is it likely that any Jewish community would keep up even the *simulacrum* of such rites? In Josephus and Philo, who are our most important witnesses to the Judaism that just preceded or was contemporary with early Christianity, there is no hint of such rites as might constitute a memory and mimicry of human victims, whether identified with a god or not. No serious pagan writer of that age ever accused the Jews of keeping up such rites openly or in secret among themselves. Apion alone had a cock-and-bull story of how Antiochus Epiphanes, when he took Jerusalem (c. 170 B.C.), found a Greek being fattened up by the Jews in the *adytum* of the temple about to be slain and eaten in honour of their god. Of course Mr. Robertson catches at this, and writes (*Pagan Christs*, p. 161) that, "in view of all the clues, we cannot pronounce that story incredible."

Evidence of Apion accepted by Mr. Robertson

What clues has he? The undoubted survival of ritual murder among the pagans of Phœnicia in that age is no clue, though it explains the genesis of Apion's tale. And Mr. Robertson has one other treasure trove—to wit, the obscure reading "Jesus Barabbas" in certain MSS. of Matthew xxvii, 17: "Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? (Jesus) Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"

The sacrificing of the mock king

It has been plausibly suggested that the addition Jesus is due to a scribe's reduplication, such as is common in Greek manuscripts, of the last syllable of the word *humin* = unto you. The *in* in uncials is a regular compendium for *Iesun* Jesus. In this way the name Jesus may have crept in before Barabbas. The entire story of Barabbas being released has an apocryphal air, for Pilate would not have let off a rebel against the Roman rule to please the Jewish mob; and the episode presupposes that it was the Sanhedrin which had condemned Jesus to death, which is equally improbable. What is probable, however, is that the Syrian soldiery to whom Pilate committed Jesus for crucifixion were accustomed to the Sacæa festival of Babylonian origin, and perhaps to the analogous Roman feast of the Saturnalia. In such celebrations a mock king was chosen, and vested with the costume, pomp, and privileges of kingship perhaps for as long as three days. Then the mimicry of slaying him was gone through, and sometimes the mock king was really put to death. Among Syrians the name Barabbas may—it is a mere hypothesis—have been the conventional appellation of the victim slain actually or in mock show on such occasions; and the soldiers of Pilate may have treated

him *en* Barabbas. Loisy suggests in his *Commentary on the Synoptics* that this was the genesis of the Barabbas story. That a pagan soldiery treated Jesus as a mock king, when they dressed him in purple and set a crown of thorns on his head, and, kneeling before him, cried "Hail King of the Jews," is quite possible; and serious scholars like Paul Wendland (*Hermes*, Vol. XXXIII (1898), foll. 175) and Mr. W. R. Paton long ago discerned the probability.

But it was one thing for Syrians and pagans to envisage the crucifixion of Jesus under the aspect of a sacrifice to Molech, quite another thing for Jews—whether as his enemies or as his partisans—to do so; nor does the Gospel narrative suggest that any Jews took part in the ceremony. Perhaps it was out of respect for Jewish susceptibilities—and they were not likely to favour any mockery of their Messianic aspirations—that Pilate caused Jesus to be divested of the purple insignia of royalty and clad in his usual garb before he was led out of the guardroom and through the streets of Jerusalem on his way to Golgotha.

Evidence of Philo

We read in Philo (*In Flaccum*, vi) of a very similar scene enacted in the streets of Alexandria within ten years of the crucifixion. The young Agrippa, elevated by Caligula to the throne of Judæa, had landed in that city, where feeling ran high between Jews and pagans. The latter, by way of ridiculing the pretensions of the Jews to have a king of their own, seized on a poor lunatic named Carabas who loitered night and day naked about the streets, ran him as far as the Gymnasium, and there stood him on a stool, so that all could see him, having first set a mock diadem of byblus on his head and thrown

a rug over his shoulders as a cloak of honour. In his hand they set a papyrus stem by way of sceptre. Having thus arrayed him, as in a mime of the theatre, with the insignia of mock royalty, the young men shouldering sticks, as if they were a bodyguard, encircled him, while others advanced, saluted his mock majesty, and pretended that he was their judge and king sitting on his throne to direct the commonwealth. Meanwhile a shout went up from the crowd around of *Marin*, which in the Syrian language signified *Lord*.

This passage of Philo goes far to prove that the mockery of Jesus in the Gospels was no more than a public ridiculing of the Jewish expectations of a national leader or Messiah who should revive the splendours of the old Davidic kingdom. In any case, the mockery is conducted at Jerusalem by Pilate's soldiers (who were not Jews, but a pagan garrison put there to overawe the Jews), at Alexandria by such Greeks as Apion penned his calumnies to gratify. Mr. Robertson's suggestion that the mock ceremony of the crucifixion was performed by Jews or Christians is thus as absurd as it is gratuitous. It was held in bitter despite of Jews and Christians, it was a mockery and reviling of their most cherished hopes and ideals; and yet he does not scruple to argue that it is "a basis for the whole gospel myth of the crucifixion."

Evidence of the Khonds

Thus he is left with the single calumny of Apion, which deserves about as much credence as the similar tales circulated to-day against the Jews of Bessarabia. That is the single item of evidence he has to prove what is the very hinge of his theory—the supposition, namely, that the Jews of Alexandria first, and after-

wards the Jews of Jerusalem, celebrated in secret once a year ritual dramas representing the ceremonial slaying of a Sun-God-Saviour Joshua, Son of the Father and of the Virgin Miriam. It is a far cry to the horrible rites of the Khonds of modern India; but Mr. Robertson, for whom wide differences of age and place matter nothing when he is explaining Christian origins, has discovered in them a key to the narrative of the crucifixion of Jesus. He runs all round the world and collects rites of ritual murder and cannibal sacraments of all ages, mixes them up, lumps them down before us, and exclaims triumphantly, There is my "psychological clue" to Christianity. The most superficial resemblances satisfy him that an incident in Jerusalem early in our era is an essential reproduction of a Khond ritual murder in honour of the goddess Tari. Was there ever an author so hopelessly uncritical in his methods?

Origin of the Gospels

The Gospels, then, are a transcript of a mock murder of the Sun-god Joshua annually performed in secret by the Jews of Jerusalem, for it had got there before it was written down and discontinued. One asks oneself why, if the Jews had tolerated so long a pagan survival among themselves, they could not keep it up a little longer; and why the "Christists" should be so anxious "to break away from paganism" at exactly the same hour. Moreover, their breach with paganism did not amount to much, since they kept the transcript of a ritual drama framed on pagan lines and inspired throughout by pagan ideas and myths; not only kept it, but elevated it into Holy Scripture. At the same time they retained the Old Testament, which as Jews they had immemorially

venerated as Holy Scripture; and for generations they went on worshipping in the Jewish temple, kept the Jewish feasts and fasts, and were zealous for circumcision. What a hotchpotch of a sect!

How could a Sun-god slain annually be slain by Pontius Pilate?

It occurs to me to ask Mr. Robertson a few questions about this transcript. It was the annual mystery play reduced to writing. The central event of the play was the annual death and resurrection of a solar or vegetation god, whose attributes and career were borrowed from the cults of Osiris, Adonis, Dionysus, and Co. All these gods died once a year; and, I suppose, had you asked one of the votaries when his god died, he would have answered, Every spring. Now all the Gospels (in common with all Christian tradition) are unanimous that Jesus only died once, about the time of the Passover, when Pilate was Roman Governor of Judæa, when Annas and Caiaphas were high-priests and King Herod about. This surely is an extraordinary record for a Sun-god who died once a year. And it was not in the transcript only that all these fixities of date crept in, for Mr. Robertson insists most vehemently that Pilate was an actor in the play. "Even the episode," he writes (*Pagan Christs*, p. 193), "of the appeal of the priests and Pharisees to Pilate to keep a guard on the tomb, though it might be a later interpolation, could quite well have been a dramatic scene." In Mark and Matthew, as containing "the earlier version" of the drama, he detects everywhere a "concrete theatricality." Thus he commits himself to the astonishing paralogism that Pilate and Herod, Annas and Caiaphas, and all the other personages of the closing chapters of the Gospels, were features in an annually recurring passion play of the Sun-god Joshua; and

this play was not a novelty introduced after the crucifixion, for there never was a real crucifixion. On the contrary, it was a secret survival among paganized Jews, a bit of Jewish pagan mummery that had been going on long ages before the actors represented in it ever lived or were heard of. Such is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the thesis which peeps out everywhere in Mr. Robertson's pages. And now we have found what we were in search of—namely, the cultus and organization to account for which a biography of Jesus had to be fabricated. The Life of Apollonius, argues Mr. Robertson, cannot have been built up round a hole, and as there was no organized cult of him (this is utterly false), there must have been a real figure to fit the biography. In the other case the organized and pre-existing cult was the nucleus around which the Gospels grew up like fairy rings around a primal fungus. It is not obvious why a cult should exclude a real founder, or, rather, a real person, in honour of whom the cult was kept up. In the worship of the Augustus or of the ancient Pharaoh, who impersonated and was Osiris, we have both. Why not have both in the case of Jesus, to whose real life and subsequent deification the Augusti and the Pharaohs offer a remarkable parallel? But there never was any pre-Christian cult and organization in Mr. Robertson's sense. It is a monstrous outgrowth of his own imagination.

Historicity of Plato falls by the canons of the mythicists

And as in the case of Apollonius, so in the case of other ancients, he is careful not to apply those methods of interpretation which he yet cannot pardon scholars for not applying to Jesus. Let us take another example. Of the life of Plato we know next to nothing. In the dialogues attributed to him his

name is only mentioned twice; and in both cases its mention could, if we adopt Mr. Robertson's canons of interpretation, be with the utmost ease explained away as an interpolation. The only life we have of him was penned by Diogenes Laertius 600 years after he lived. The details of his life supplied by Aristoxenus, a pupil of Aristotle, are obviously false. The only notices preserved of him that can be claimed to be contemporary are the few derived from his nephew Speusippus. Now what had Speusippus to tell? Why, a story of the birth of Plato which, as Mr. Robertson (p. 293) writes, scarcely differs from the story of Matthew i, 18–25:

"In the special machinery of the Joseph and Mary myth—the warning in a dream and the abstention of the husband—we have a simple duplication of the relations of the father and mother of Plato, the former being warned in a dream by Apollo, so that the child was virgin-born."

Again, just as the Christians chose a "solar date" for the birthday of Jesus, so the Platonists, according to Mr. Robertson, p. 308, "placed the master's birthday on that of Apollo—that is, either at Christmas or at the vernal equinox."

Now in the case of Jesus such legends and events as the above suffice to convince Mr. Robertson that the history of Jesus as told in the Gospels is a mere survival of "ancient solar or other worship of a babe Joshua, son of Miriam," of which ancient worship nothing is known except that it looms large in the imagination of himself, of Dr. Drews, and of Professor W. B. Smith. On the other hand, we do know that a cult of Apollo existed, and that it is no fiction of these modern writers. Surely, then, it is time we

changed our opinion about the historicity of Plato. Is it not as clear as daylight that he was the survival of a pre-Platonic Apollo myth? We know the *rôle* assigned to Apollo of revealer of philosophic truth. Well, here were the dialogues and letters of Plato, calling for an explanation of their origin; a sect of Platonists who cherished these writings and kept the feast of their master on a solar date. On all the principles of the new mythico-symbolic system Plato, as a man, had no right to exist. "Without Jesus," writes Drews, "the rise of Christianity can be quite well understood." Yes, and, by the same logic, no less the rise of Platonism without Plato, or of the cult of Apollonius without Apollonius. What is sauce for the goose is surely sauce for the gander. With a mere change of names we could write of Plato what on p. 282 Mr. Robertson writes of Jesus. Let us do it: "The gospel Jesus (*read* dialogist Plato) is as enigmatic from a humanist as from a supernaturalist point of view. Miraculously born, to the knowledge of many (*read* of his nephew Speusippus, of Clearchus whose testimony 'belongs to Plato's generation,' of Anaxilides the historian and others), he reappears as a natural man even in the opinion of his parents (*read* of nephew Speusippus and the rest); the myth will not cohere. Rationally considered, he (Plato) is an unintelligible portent; a Galilean (*read* Athenian) of the common people, critically untraceable till his full manhood, when he suddenly appears as a cult-founder."

The Virgin Birth no part of the earliest Gospel tradition

Why does Mr. Robertson so incessantly labour the point that the belief in the supernatural birth of Jesus came first in time, and was anterior to the belief that he was born a man of men? This he

implies in the words just cited: "Miraculously born, to the knowledge of many, he reappears as a natural man." A story almost identical with that of the Massacre of the Innocents by Herod was, Mr. Robertson tells us (p. 184), told of the Emperor Augustus *in his lifetime*, and appears in Suetonius "as accepted history." And elsewhere (p. 395) he writes: "It was after these precedents (*i.e.*, of Antiochus and Ptolemy) that Augustus, besides having himself given out, like Alexander, as begotten of a God, caused himself to be proclaimed in the East.....as being born under Providence a Saviour and a God and the beginning of an Evangel of peace to mankind." Like Plato's story, then, so the official and contemporary legends of Augustus closely resembled the later ones of Jesus. Yet Mr. Robertson complacently accepts the historicity of Plato and Augustus, merely brushing aside the miraculous stories and supernatural *rôle*. Nowhere in his works does he manifest the faintest desire to apply in the domain of profane history the canons which he so rigidly enforces in ecclesiastical.

Yet there are passages in Mr. Robertson's works where he seems, to use his own phrase, to "glimpse" the truth. Thus, on p. 124 of *Christianity and Mythology* he writes: "Jesus is said to be born of a Virgin; but not in the original version of the first gospel; and not in the second; and not in the fourth; and not in any writing or by any mouth known to or credited by the writers of the Pauline Epistles. Here we see how a myth may be superimposed on a cult."

Does not this mean that a *cult* of Jesus already existed before this myth was added, and that the myth is absent in the earliest documents of the cult? Again, on p. 274, he writes that "the Christian

Virgin-myth and Virgin-and-child worship are certainly of pre-Christian origin, and *of comparatively late Christian acceptance*." Yet, when I drew attention in the *Literary Guide* of December 1, 1912, to the inconsistency with this passage of the later one above cited, which asserts that, "Miraculously born, to the knowledge of many, he reappears as a natural man," he replied (January 1, 1913) that "a reader of ordinary candour would understand that 'acceptance' applied to the official action of the Church." It appears, therefore, that in the cryptic secret society of the Joshua Sun-God-Saviour, which held its séances at Jerusalem at the beginning of our era, there was an official circle which lagged behind the unofficial multitude. The latter knew from the first that their solar myth was miraculously born; but the official and controlling inner circle ignored the miracle until late in the development of the cult, and then at last issued a number of documents from which it was excluded. One wonders why. Why trouble to utter these documents in which Jesus "reappears as a natural man," long after the sect as a whole were committed to the miraculous birth? What is the meaning of these wheels within wheels, that hardly hunt together? We await an explanation. Meanwhile let us probe the new mythico-symbolism a little further.

The cleansing of the temple

Why did the solar God Joshua-Jesus scourge the money-changers out of the temple? Answer: Because it is told of Apollonius of Tyana, "that he expelled from the cities of the left bank of the Hellespont some sorcerers who were extorting money for a great propitiatory sacrifice to prevent earthquakes."

The connection is beautifully obvious like the rest of our author's *rapprochements;* but we must accept it, or we shall lay ourselves open to the reproach of "psychological resistance to evidence." Nor must we ask how the memoirs of Damis, that lay in a corner till Philostratus got hold of them in the year 215, enjoyed so much vogue among the "Christists" of Jerusalem long years before they can conceivably have been written.

Why on the occasion in question did Jesus make a scourge of cords with which to drive the sheep and oxen out of the Temple? Answer: "Because in the Assyrian and Egyptian systems a scourge-bearing god is a very common figure on the monuments..... it is specially associated with Osiris, the Saviour, Judge, and Avenger. A figure of Osiris, reverenced as 'Chrestos' the benign God, would suffice to set up among Christists as erewhile among pagans the demand for an explanation."

Here we get a precious insight into the why and wherefore of the Gospels. They were intended by the "Christists" to explain the meaning of Osiris statues. Why could they not have asked one of the priests of Osiris, who as a rule might be found in the neighbourhood of his statues, what the emblem meant? And, after all, were statues of Osiris so plentiful in Jerusalem, where the sight even of a Roman eagle aroused a riot?

Janus-Peter the *bifrons*

Who was Peter? Answer: An understudy of Mithras, who in the monuments bears two keys; or of Janus, who bears the keys and the rod, and as opener of the year (hence the name January) stands at the head of the twelve months.

Why did Peter deny Jesus? Answer: Because

Janus was called *bifrons*. The epithet puzzled the "Christists" or "Jesuists" of Jerusalem, who, instead of asking the first Roman soldier they met what it meant, proceeded to render the word *bifrons* in the sense of "double-faced," quite a proper epithet they thought for Peter, who thenceforth had to be held guilty of an act of double-dealing. For we must not forget that it was the epithet which suggested to the Christists the invention of the story, and not the story that of the epithet. But even Mr. Robertson is not quite sure of this; and it does not matter, where there is such a wealth of alternatives. For Peter is also an understudy of "the fickle Proteus." Janus's double head was anyhow common on coins, and with that highly relevant observation he essays to protect his theories of Janus-Peter from any possible criticisms. Indeed, we are forbidden to call in question the above conclusions. They are quite certain, because the "Christists" were intellectually "about the business of forming myths in explanation of old ritual and old statuary" (p. 350). Wonderful people these early "Christists," who, although they were, as Mr. Robertson informs us (p. 348), "apostles of a Judaic cult preaching circumcision," and therefore by instinct inimical to all plastic art, nevertheless rivalled the modern archæologist in their desire to explain *old statuary*. They seem to have been the prototypes of the Jews of Wardour Street. No less wonderful were they as philologists, in that, being Hebrews and presumably speaking Aramaic, they took such a healthy interest in the meaning of Latin words, and discovered in *bifrons* a sense which it never bore in any Latin author who ever used it!

The keys of Peter

It appears to have escaped the notice of Professor Franz Cumont that Mithras carries in his monuments two keys. The two keys were an attribute of the Mithraic Kronos, in old Persian Zervan, whom relatively late the Latins confused with Janus, who also had two heads and carried keys. That late Christian images of Peter were imitated from statues of these gods no one need doubt, and Fr. Cumont (*Monuments de Mithras*, i, 85) does not reject such an idea. It is quite another thing to assume dogmatically that the text Matthew xvi, 19 was suggested by a statue of Janus or of Zervan. To explain it you need not leave Jewish ground, but merely glance at Isaiah xxii, 22, where the Lord is made to say of Eliakim: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open." The same imagery meets us in Revelation iii, 7 (copied from Isaiah), Luke xi, 52, and elsewhere. A. Sulzbach (in *Ztschr. f.d. Neutest. Wissenschaft*, 1903, p. 190) points out that every Jew, up to A.D. 70, would understand such imagery, for he saw every evening the temple keys ceremoniously taken from a hole under the temple floor, where they were kept under a slab of stone. The Levite watcher locked up the temple and replaced the keys under the slab, upon which he then laid his bed for the night. In connection with the magic power of binding and loosing the keys had, of course, a further and magical significance, not in Judæa alone, but all over the world, and the Evangelists did not need to examine statues of Janus or Zervan in order to come by this bit of everyday symbolism.

N.B.—No connection of Janus-Peter of the Gospels

with Peter of the Pauline Epistles! The one was a mythical companion of the Sun-god, the other a man of flesh and blood, according to Mr. Robertson.

Joseph and his ass

Who was Joseph? Answer: Forasmuch as "the Christian system is a patchwork of a hundred suggestions drawn from pagan art and ritual usage" (p. 305), and "Christism was only neo-Paganism grafted on Judaism" (p. 338), Joseph must be regarded as "a partial revival of the ancient adoration of the God Joseph as well as of that of the God Daoud" (p. 303). He was also, seeing that he took Mary and her child on an ass into Egypt, a reminiscence; or, shall we not say, an explanation of "the feeble old man leading an ass in the sacred procession of Isis, as described by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses*."

There is no mention of Joseph's ass in the Gospels, but that does not matter. Dr. Drews is better informed, and would have us recognize in Joseph an understudy of Kinyras, the father of Adonis, who "is said to have been some kind of artisan, a smith, or carpenter. That is to say, he is supposed to have invented the hammer," etc. Might I suggest the addition of the god Thor to the collection of gospel aliases? The gods Joseph and Daoud are purely modern fictions; no ancient Jew ever heard of either.

Why was Jesus crucified?

The Crucifixion

"The story of the Crucifixion *may* rest on the remote datum of an actual crucifixion of Jesus Ben Pandira, the possible Jesus of Paul, dead long before, and represented by no preserved biography or teachings whatever."

The Christists were clearly pastmasters in the art of explaining *ignotum per ignotius*. For on the next page we learn that it is not known whether this

worthy "ever lived or was crucified." In *Pagan Christs* he is acknowledged to be a "mere name." However this be, "it was the mythic significance of crucifixion that made the early fortune of the cult, with the aid of the mythic significance of the name Jeschu = Joshua, the ancient Sun-god."

The meaning of this oracular pronouncement is too profound for me to attempt to fathom it. Let us pass on to another point in the new elucidation of the Gospels.

W. B. Smith on exorcisms of devils

What were the exorcisms of evil spirits ascribed to the ancient Sun-god Joshua, under his *alias* of Jesus of Nazareth?

In his *Pagan Christs*, as in his *Christianity and Mythology*, Mr. Robertson unkindly leaves us in the lurch about this matter, although we would dearly like to know what were the particular archæological researches of the "Christists" and "Jesuists" that led them to coin these myths of exorcisms performed, and of devils cast out of the mad or sick by their solar myth. Nor does Dr. Drews help us much. Never mind. Professor W. B. Smith nobly stands in the breach, so we will let him take up the parable; the more so because, in handling this problem, he may be said to have excelled himself. On p. 57, then, of *Ecce Deus*, he premises, in approaching this delicate topic, that "in the activity of the Jesus and the apostles, as delineated in the Gospels, the one all-important moment is the *casting-out of demons*."

With this all will agree; but what follows is barely consonant with the thesis of his friends. He cites in effect Mark iii, 14, 15, and the parallel passages in which Jesus is related to have sent forth the twelve disciples to preach and to have authority to cast

out the demons. Now, according to the mythico-symbolical theory, the career of Jesus and his disciples lay not on earth, but in that happy region where mythological personages live and move and have their being. As Dr. Drews says (*The Christ Myth*, p. 117): "In reality the whole of the family and home life of the Messiah, Jesus, took place in heaven among the gods."

Accordingly, Dr. W. B. Smith finds it "amazing that anyone should hesitate an instant over the sense" of the demonological episodes in the Gospels, and he continues: "When we recall the fact that the early Christians uniformly understood the heathen gods to be demons, and uniformly represented the mission of Jesus to be the overthrow of these demon gods, it seems as clear as the sun at noon that this fall of Satan from heaven[1] can be nothing less (and how could it possibly be anything more?) than the headlong ruin of polytheism—the complete triumph of the One Eternal God. It seems superfluous to insist on anything so palpable.....Can any rational man for a moment believe that the Saviour sent forth his apostles and disciples with such awful solemnity to heal the few lunatics that languished in Galilee? Is that the way the sublimist of teachers would found the new and true religion?"

In the last sentence our author nods and lapses into the historical mood; for how can one talk of a mythical Joshua being a teacher and founding a new religion—of his sending forth the apostles and disciples? These things are done on earth, and not up in heaven "among the gods," as Drews says. It

[1] See Luke x, 17–20.

is, perhaps, impertinent, for the rest, to criticize so exalted an argument as Professor Smith's; yet the question suggests itself, why, if the real object of the mystic sectaries who worshipped in secret the "Proto-Christian God, the Jesus," was to acquaint the faithful with the triumph of the heavenly Jesus over the demon-gods of paganism—why, in that case, did they wrap it up in purely demonological language? All around them exorcists, Jewish and pagan, were driving out demons of madness and disease at every street corner—dumb devils, rheumatic devils, blind devils, devils of every sort and kind. Was it entirely appropriate for these mystic devotees to encourage the use of demonological terminology, when they meant something quite else? "These early propagandists," he tells us, p. 143, "were great men, were very great men; they conceived noble and beautiful and attractive ideas, which they defended with curious learning and logic, and recommended with captivating rhetoric and persuasive oratory and consuming zeal."

Surely it was within the competence of such egregious teachers to say without disguise what they really meant, instead of beating about the bush and penning stories which so nearly reproduced the grovelling superstitions of the common herd around them? They might at least have issued a Delphin edition of their gospels, with a paraphrase in the margin to explain the text and to save the faithful from taking these stories literally—for so they took them as far back as we can trace the documents; and, what is more, in all those derivative churches all over the world which continued the inner life of Professor Smith's mystic sectaries, we hear from the earliest age of the appointing of vulgar exorcists, whose duty

was to expel from the faithful the demons of madness and of all forms of sickness.

But worse than this. We know from Mr. Robertson and Dr. Drews that the same Proto-Christian Joshua-God, who was waging war in heaven on the pagan gods and goddesses, was himself a composite myth made up of memories of Krishna, Æsculapius, Osiris, Apollo, Dionysus, Apollonius, and a hundred other fiends. Mr. Robertson attests this, p. 305, in these words: "As we have seen and shall see throughout this investigation, the Christian system is a patchwork of a hundred suggestions drawn from pagan art and ritual usage."

Is it quite appropriate that the pre-Christian Jesus or Joshua should turn and rend his pagan congeners in the manner described by Professor W. B. Smith? His mythical antecedents, as ascertained by Mr. Robertson and Dr. Drews, are grotesquely incompatible with the *rôle* of monotheistic founder assigned him by Professor W. B. Smith. Are we to suppose that the learned and eloquent propagandists of his cult were aware of this incompatibility, and for that reason chose to veil their monotheistic propaganda in the decent obscurity of everyday demonological language?

Mary and her homonyms

Who was Mary, the mother of Jesus?

Let Dr. Drews speak first:—

> Now if Joseph, as we have already seen, was originally a god, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a goddess. Under the name of Maya, she is the mother of Agni—*i.e.*, the principle of motherhood and creation simply, as which she is in the Rigveda at one time represented by the fire-producing wood, the soft pith, in which the fire-stick was whirled; at another as the earth, with which the sky has mated. She appears under the

same name as the mother of Buddha as well as of the Greek Hermes. She is identical with Maira (Maera) as, according to Pausanias, viii, 12, 48, the pleiad Maia, wife of Hephaistos was called. She appears among the Persians as the "virgin" mother of Mithras. As Myrrha she is the mother of the Syrian Adonis; as Semiramis, mother of the Babylonian Ninus (Marduk). In the Arabic legend she appears under the name of Mirzam as mother of the mythical saviour Joshua; while the Old Testament gives this name to the virgin sister of that Joshua who was so closely related to Moses; and, according to Eusebius, Merris was the name of the Egyptian princess who found Moses in a basket and became his foster mother.

The above *purpureus pannus* is borrowed by Dr. Drews in the second edition of his work from Mr. Robertson's book, p. 297. Here is the original:—

It is not possible from the existing data to connect historically such a cult with its congeners; but the mere analogy of names and epithets goes far. The mother of Adonis, the slain "Lord" of the great Syrian cult, is Myrrha; and Myrrha in one of her myths is the weeping tree from which the babe Adonis is born. Again, Hermes, the Greek *Logos*, has for mother Maia, whose name has further connections with Mary. In one myth Maia is the daughter of Atlas, thus doubling with Maira, who has the same father, and who, having "died a virgin," was seen by Odysseus in Hades. Mythologically, Maira is identified with the Dog-Star, which is the star of Isis. Yet again, the name appears in the East as Maya, the virgin-mother of Buddha; and it is remarkable that, according to a Jewish legend, the name of the Egyptian princess who found the babe Moses was Merris. The plot is still further thickened by the fact that, as we learn from the monuments, one of the daughters of Ramses II was named Meri. And as Meri meant "beloved," and the name was at times given to men, besides being used in the phrase "beloved of the gods," the field of mythic speculation is wide.

And we feel that it is, indeed, wide, when, on p. 301, the three Marias mentioned by Mark are equated with the three *Moirai* or Fates!

In another passage we meet afresh with one of these equations, p. 306. It runs thus: "On the hypothesis that the mythical Joshua, son of Miriam, was an early Hebrew deity, it may be that one form of the Tammuz cult in pre-Christian times was a worship of a mother and child—Mary and Adonis; that, in short, Maria = Myrrha, and that Jesus was a name of Adonis."

Pre-philological arguments

From such deliverances we gather that in Mr. Robertson and his disciples we have survivals of a stage of culture which may be called prephilological. A hundred years ago or more the most superficial resemblance of sound was held to be enough of a ground for connecting words and names together, and Oxford divines were busy deriving all other tongues from the Hebrew spoken in the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve. Mr. Robertson sets himself (p. 139) to ridicule these old-fashioned writers, and regales us with not a few examples of that over-facile identification of cult names that have no real mutual affinity which was then in vogue. Thus *Krishna* was held to be a corruption of *Christ* by certain oriental missionaries, just as, inversely, within my memory, certain English Rationalists argued the name *Christ* to be a disguise of *Krishna*. So *Brahma* was identified with *Abraham*, and Napoleon with the *Apollyon* of Revelation. One had hoped that this phase of culture was past and done with; but Messrs. Robertson and Drews revive it in their books, and seem anxious to perpetuate it. As with names, so with myths. On their every page we encounter—to use the apt phrase

of M. Émile Durkheim[1]—*ces rapprochements tumultueux et sommaires qui ont discredité la méthode comparative auprès d'un certain nombre de bons esprits.*

Right use of comparative method

The one condition of advancing knowledge and clearing men's minds of superstition and cant by application of the comparative method in religion, is that we should apply it, as did Robertson Smith and his great predecessor, Dr. John Spencer,[2] cautiously, and in a spirit of scientific scholarship. It does not do to argue from superficial resemblances of sound that Maria is the same name as the Greek *Moira*, or that the name Maia has "connections with Mary"; or, again, that "the name (*Maria*) appears in the East as Maya." The least acquaintance with Hebrew would have satisfied Mr. Robertson that the original form of the name he thus conjures with is not Maria, but *Miriam*, which does not lend itself to his hardy equations. I suspect he is carried away by the *parti pris* which leaks out in the following passage of his henchman and imitator, Dr. Drews[3]: "The romantic cult of Jesus must be combated at all costs.....This cannot be done more effectually than by taking its basis in the theory of the historical Jesus from beneath its feet."

If "at all costs" means at the cost of common sense and scholarship, I cannot agree. I am not disposed, at the invitation of any self-constituted high priest of Rationalism, to derive old Hebrew names from Egyptian, Greek, and Buddhist appellations that

[1] *La Vie Religieuse*, p. 134.

[2] In his *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus et earum rationibus libri tres*, printed at the Hague in 1686, but largely written twenty years earlier.

[3] *The Christ Myth*, 2nd ed., p. 18.

happen to show an initial and one or two other letters in common. I will not believe that a "Christist" of Alexandria or Jerusalem, in the streets of which the Latin language was seldom or never heard, took the epithet *bifrons* in a wrong sense, and straightway invented the story of a Peter who had denied Jesus. I cannot admit that the cults of Osiris, Dionysus, Apollo, or any other ancient Sun-god, are echoed in a single incident narrated in the primitive evangelical tradition that lies before us in Mark and the non-Marcan document used by the authors of the first and third Gospels; I do not believe that any really educated man or woman would for a moment entertain any of the equations propounded by Mr. Robertson, and of which I have given a few select examples.

Marett on method

Mr. Marett, in his essay entitled *The Birth of Humility*, by way of criticizing certain modern abuses of the comparative method in the field of the investigation of the origin of moral ideas and religious beliefs, has justly remarked that "No isolated fragment of custom or belief can be worth much for the purposes of comparative science. In order to be understood, it must first be viewed in the light of the whole culture, the whole corporate soul-life, of the particular ethnic group concerned. Hence the new way is to emphasize concrete differences, whereas the old way was to amass resemblances heedlessly abstracted from their social context. Which way is the better is a question that well-nigh answers itself."

Apply the above rule to nascent Christianity. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus ever speaks as a Jew to Jews. Jewish monotheism is presupposed by the authors of them to have been no less the heritage of Jesus than of his audiences. The rare exceptions are

carefully noticed by them. This consideration has so impressed Professor W. B. Smith that he urges the thesis that the Christian religion originated as a monotheist propaganda. That is no doubt an exaggeration, for it was at first a Messianic movement or impulse among Jews, and therefore did not need to set the claims of monotheism in the foreground, and, accordingly, in the Synoptic Gospels they are nowhere urged. In spite of this exaggeration, however, Mr. Smith's book occupies a higher plane than the works of Dr. Drews and Mr. Robertson, insofar as he shows some slight insight into the original nature of the religion, whereas they show none at all. They merely, in Mr. Marett's phrase, "amass resemblances [would they were even such!] heedlessly abstracted from their context," and resolve a cult which, as it appears on the stage of history, is Jewish to its core, of which the Holy Scripture was no other than the Law and the Prophets, and of which the earliest documents, as Mr. Selwyn has shown, are saturated with the Jewish Septuagint—they try to resolve this cult into a tagrag and bobtail of Greek and Roman paganism, of Buddhism, of Brahmanism, of Mithraism (hardly yet born), of Egyptian, African, Assyrian, old Persian,[1] and any other religions with which these writers have a second-hand and superficial acquaintance. Never once do they pause and ask themselves the simple questions: firstly, how the early Christians came to be imbued with so intimate

[1] It is possible, of course, that Jewish Messianic and apocalyptic lore in the first century B.C. had been more or less evolved through contact with the religion of Zoroaster; but this lore, as we meet with it in the Gospels, derives exclusively from Jewish sources, and was part of the common stock of popular Jewish aspirations.

a knowledge of idolatrous cults far and near, new and old; secondly, why they set so much store by them as the mythico-symbolic hypothesis presupposes that they did; and, thirdly, why, if they valued them so much, they were at pains to translate them into the utterly different and antagonistic form which they wear in the Gospels. In a word, why should such connoisseurs of paganism have disguised themselves as monotheistic and messianic Jews? Mr. Robertson tries to save his hypothesis by injecting a little dose of Judaism into his "Christists" and "Jesuists"; but anyone who has read Philo or Josephus or the Bible, not to mention the Apostolic Fathers and Justin Martyr, will see at a glance that there is no room in history for such a hybrid.

Methods of Robertson and Lorinser

That Mr. Robertson should put his name to such works as Dr. Drews imitates and singles out for special praise is the more remarkable, because, in urging the independence of certain Hindoo cults against Christian missionaries who want to see in them mere reflections of Christianity, he shows himself both critical and wide-minded. These characteristics he displays in his refutation of the opinion of a certain Dr. Lorinser that the dialogue between Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, known as the Bhagavat Gîtâ and embodied in the old Hindoo Epic of the Mahâbhârata, "is a patchwork of Christian teaching." Dr. Lorinser had adduced a chain of passages from this document which to his mind are echoes of the New Testament. Though many of these exhibit a striking conformity with aphorisms of the Gospels, we are nevertheless constrained to agree with Mr. Robertson's criticism, which is as follows (p. 262):—

> The first comment that must occur to every instructed reader on perusing these and the other "parallels" advanced by Dr. Lorinser is, that on the one hand the parallels are very frequently such as could be made by the dozen between bodies of literature which have unquestionably never been brought in contact, so strained and far-fetched are they; and that, on the other hand, they are discounted by quite as striking parallels between New Testament texts and pre-Christian pagan writings.

Mr. Robertson then adduces a number of striking parallelisms between the New Testament and old Greek and Roman writers, and continues thus: "Such parallels as these, I repeat, could be multiplied to any extent from the Greek and Latin classics alone.....But is it worth while to heap up the disproof of a thesis so manifestly idle?"

Dionysus and Jesus

It occurs to ask whether it was not worth the while of Mr. Robertson to inquire whether the Evangelist could "unquestionably have been brought in contact" with the Dionysiac group of myths before he assumed so dogmatically, against students of such weight as Professor Percy Gardner and Dr. Estlin Carpenter, that the myth of Bacchus meeting with a couple of asses on his way to Dodona was the "Christist's" model for the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on an ass? Might he not have reflected that then, as now, there was no other way of entering Jerusalem unless you went on foot? And what has Jerusalem to do with Dodona? What has Bacchus's choice of one ass to ride on in common with Matthew's literary deformation, according to which Jesus rode on two asses at once? Lastly, what had Bacchus to do with Jesus? Has the Latin wine-god a single trait in common with the Christian founder? Is it not

rather the case that any conscious or even unconscious assimilation of Bacchus myths conflicts with what Mr. Marett would call "the whole culture, the whole corporate soul-life" of the early Christian community, as the surviving documents picture it, and other evidence we have not? Yet Mr. Robertson deduces from such paltry "parallels" as the above the conclusion that Jesus, on whose real personality a score of early and independent literary sources converge, never existed at all, and that he was a "composite myth." There is no other example of an eclectic myth arbitrarily composed by connoisseurs out of a religious art and story not their own; still less of such a myth being humanized and accepted by the next generation as a Jewish Messiah.

In the same context (p. 264) Mr. Robertson remarks sensibly enough that "No great research or reflection is needed to make it clear that certain commonplaces of ethics as well as of theology are equally inevitable conclusions in all religious systems that rise above savagery. Four hundred years before Jesus, Plato declared that it was very difficult for the rich to be good; does anyone believe that any thoughtful Jew needed Plato's help to reach the same notion?"

I would ask, does anyone believe that a thoughtful Jew needed the stimulus of a statuette of Osiris in order that he should record, or, maybe, invent, the story of Jesus clearing the money-changers out of the temple with a scourge? Even admitting—what I am as little as anyone inclined to admit—that the Peter of the early Gospels is, as regards his personality and his actions, a fable, a mere invention of a Jewish storyteller, need we suppose that the storyteller in

question depended for his inspiration on Janus? You might as well suppose that the authors of the *Arabian Nights* founded their stories on the myths of Greek and Roman gods. Again, the Jews were traditionally distributed into twelve tribes or clans. Let us grant only for argument's sake that the life of Jesus the Messiah as narrated in the first three Gospels is a romance, we yet must ask, Which is more probable, that the author of the romance assigned twelve apostles to Jesus because there were twelve tribes to whom the message of the impending Kingdom of God had to be carried, or because there are twelve signs in the Zodiac? He agrees (p. 347) that Luke's story of the choice of the seventy disciples "visibly connects with the Jewish idea that there were seventy nations in the world." Why, then, reject the view that Jesus chose twelve apostles because there were twelve tribes? Not at all. Having decided that Jesus was the Sun-God-Saviour Joshua, a pure figment of his brain, Mr. Robertson is ready to violate the canons of evidence he appeals to on p. 347, and will have it that in the Gospels the apostles are Zodiacal signs, and that their leader is Janus, the opener of the year. "The Zodiacal sign gives the clue" (p. 339), in his opinion, to this as to much else.

Dr. Lorinser

Let us return to the case of Dr. Lorinser. "We are asked to believe that Brahmans expounding a highly-developed Pantheism went assiduously to the (unattainable) New Testament for the wording of a number of their propositions, pantheistic and other, while assimilating absolutely nothing of distinctively Christian doctrine.....Such a position is possible only to a mesmerized believer." Surely one may exclaim of Mr. Robertson, *De te fabula narratur*, and rewrite

the above as follows: "We are asked to believe that 'Christists,' who were so far Jewish as to practise circumcision, to use the Hebrew Scriptures, to live in Jerusalem under the presidency and patronage of the Jewish High-priest, to foster and propagate Jewish monotheism, went assiduously to the (unattainable) rites, statuary, art, and beliefs of pagan India, Egypt, Ancient Babylon, Persia, etc., for all 'the narrative myths' (p. 263) of the story in which they narrated the history of their putative founder Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, while assimilating absolutely nothing of distinctively pagan doctrine."

Dr. Lorinser, for urging a thesis infinitely less absurd, is denounced as "a mesmerized believer"; and on the next page Dr. Weber, who agrees with him, is rebuked for his "judicial blindness." Yet in the same context we are told that "a crude and *naïf* system, like the Christism of the second gospel and the earlier form of the first, borrows inevitably from the more highly evolved systems with which it comes socially in contact, absorbing myth and mystery and dogma till it becomes as sophisticated as they."

It is quite true, as Gibbon observed, that the *naïf* figure of Jesus, as presented in the Synoptic Gospels, was soon overlaid with that of the *logos*, and all sorts of Christological cobwebs were within a few generations spun around his head to the effacement both of the teacher and of what he taught. But in the earliest body of the evangelical tradition, as we can construct it from the first three Gospels, there is little or nothing that is not essentially Jewish and racy of the soil of Judæa. The borrowings of Christianity from pagan neighbours began with the flocking into the new Messianic society of Gentile converts. The

earlier borrowings with which Messrs. Robertson and Drews fill their volumes are one and all "resemblances heedlessly abstracted from their context," and are as far-fetched and as fanciful as the dreams of the adherents of the Banner of Israel, or as the cypher of the Bacon-Shaksperians, over which Mr. Robertson is prone to make merry. "Is it," to use his own words, "worth while to heap up the disproof of a thesis so manifestly idle?"

Chapter II

PAGAN MYSTERY PLAYS

Is Mark's Gospel a religious romance?

I can imagine some people arguing that Mark's Gospel might be a religious novel, of which the scene is laid in Jerusalem and Galilee among Jews; that it was by a literary artifice impregnated with Jewish ideas; that the references to Sadducees and Pharisees were introduced as appropriate to the age and clime; that the old Jewish Scriptures are for the same reason acknowledged by all the actors and interlocutors as holy writ; that demonological beliefs were thrown in as being characteristic of Palestinian society of the time the writer purported to write about; that it is of the nature of a literary trick that the peculiar Messianic and Apocalyptic beliefs and aspirations rife among Jews of the period B.C. 50–A.D. 160 and later, are made to colour the narrative from beginning to end. All these elements of verisimilitude, I say, taken singly or together, do not of necessity exclude the hypothesis that it may be one of the most skilfully constructed historical novels ever written. Have we not, it may be urged, in the *Recognitions* or Itinerary of Saint Clement, in the Acts of Thomas, in the story of Paul and Thecla, similar compositions?

Certainly not in the way assumed by Drews and Robertson,

In view of what we know of the dates and diffusion of the Gospels, of their literary connections with one another, and of the reappearance of their chief *personæ dramatis* in the Pauline letters, such a hypo-

thesis is of course wildly improbable, yet not utterly absurd. We have to assume in the writer a knowledge of the Messianic movement among the Jews, a familiarity with their demonological beliefs and practices, with their sects, and so forth; and it is all readily assumable. In the Greek novel of Chariton we have an example of such an historical romance, the scene being laid in Syracuse and Asia Minor shortly after the close of the Peloponnesian war. But such romances are not cult documents of a parabolic or allegorical kind, as the Gospels are supposed by these writers to be. They do not bring a divine being down from Olympus, and pretend all through that he was a man who was born, lived, and died on the cross in a particular place and at a particular date. We have no other example of documents whose authors, by way of honouring a God up in heaven who never made any epiphany on earth nor ever underwent incarnation, made a man of him, and concocted an elaborate earthly record of him. Why did they do it? What was the object of the "Jesuists" and "Christists" in hoaxing their own and all subsequent generations and in building up a lasting cult and Church on what they knew were fables?

whose hypothesis is self-destructive,

In the Homeric hymns and other religious documents not only of the Greeks, but of the Hindoos, we have no doubt histories of the gods written by their votaries; but in these hymns they put down what they believed, they did not of set design falsify the legend of the god, and describe his birth and parentage, when they knew he never had any; his ministrations and teaching career, when he never ministered or taught; his persecution by enemies and his death, when he was never persecuted and

never died. Or are we to suppose that all these things were related in the Sun-god Joshua legend? No, reply Messrs. Drews and Robertson. For the stories told in the Gospels are all modelled on pagan or astral myths; the persons who move in their pages are the gods and demigods of Egyptian, Greek, Latin, Hindoo legends. Clearly the Saviour-God Joshua had no legend or story of his own, or it would not be necessary to pad him out with the furniture and appurtenances of Osiris, Dionysus, Serapis, Æsculapius, and who knows what other gods besides. And—strangest feature of all—it is Jews, men circumcised, propagandists of Jewish monotheism, who, in the interests of "a Judaic cult" (p. 348), go rummaging in all the dustbins of paganism, in order to construct a legend or allegory of their god. Why could they not rest content with him as they found him in their ancient tradition?

and irreconcilable with ascertained history of Judaism

The Gospels, like any other ancient document, have to be accounted for. They did not engender themselves, like a mushroom, nor drop out of heaven ready written. I have admitted as possible, though wild and extravagant, the hypothesis of their being a Messianic romance, which subsequently came to be mistaken for sober history; and there are of course plenty of legendary incidents in their pages. But such a hypothesis need not be discussed. It is not that of these three authors, and would not suit them. They insist on seeing in them so many manifestoes of the secret sect of Jews who worshipped a god Joshua. For Dr. Drews and Mr. Robertson the Gospels describe a "Jesuine" mystery play evolved "from a Palestinian rite of human sacrifice in which the annual victim was 'Jesus the Son of the Father.'" There is

no trace in Jewish antiquity of any such rite in epochs which even remotely preceded Christianity, nor is the survival of such a rite of human sacrifice even thinkable in Jerusalem, where the "Christists" laid their plot. And why should they eke out their plot with a thousand scraps of pagan mythology?

Prof. Smith's hypothesis of a mythical Jesus mythically humanized in a monotheistic propaganda,

I was taught in my childhood to venerate the Gospels; but I never knew before what really wonderful documents they are. Let us, however, turn to Professor W. B. Smith, who does not pile on paganism so profusely as his friends, nor exactly insist on a pagan basis for the Gospels. His hypothesis in brief is identical with theirs, for he insists that Jesus the man never existed at all. Jesus is, in Professor Smith's phrase, "a humanized God"; in the diction of Messrs. Drews and Robertson, a myth. Professor Smith allows (*Ecce Deus*, p. 78) that the mere "fact that a myth, or several myths, may be found associated with the name of an individual by no means relegates that individual into the class of the unhistorical." That is good sense, and so is the admission which follows, that "we may often explain the legends from the presence of the historical personality, *independently known to be historic*." But in regard to Jesus alone among the figures of the past he, like his friends, rules out both considerations. The common starting-point of all three writers is that the earliest Gospel narratives do not "describe *any human character at all;* on the contrary, the individuality in question is *distinctly divine and not human*, in the earliest portrayal. As time goes on it is true that certain human elements do creep in, particularly in Luke and John.....In Mark there is really no man at all; the Jesus is God, or at least essentially divine,

throughout. He wears only a transparent garment of flesh. Mark historizes only."

How is it, we ask, that humanity has pored over the Synoptic Gospels for nearly two thousand years, and discerned in them the portraiture at least of a man of flesh and blood, who can be imaged as such in statuary and painting? Even if it were conceded, as I said above, that the Gospel representation of Jesus is an imaginary portrait, like that of William Tell or John Inglesant, still, who, that is not mad, will deny that there exist in it multiple human traits, fictions may be of a novelist, yet indisputably there? Mr. Smith's hardy denial of them can only lead his readers to suspect him of paradox. Moreover, the champions of traditional orthodoxy have had in the past every reason to side with Professor Smith in his attempted elimination of all human traits and characteristics. Yet in recent years they have been constrained to admit that in Luke and John the human elements, far from creeping in, show signs of creeping out. "The received notion," adds Professor Smith, "that in the early Marcan narratives the Jesus is distinctly human, and that the process of deification is fulfilled in John, is precisely the reverse of the truth." Once more we rub our eyes. In Mark Jesus is little more than that most familiar of old Jewish figures, an earthly herald of the imminent kingdom of heaven; late and little by little he is recognized by his followers as himself the Messiah whose advent he formerly heralded. As yet he is neither divine nor the incarnation of a pre-existent quasi-divine Logos or angel. In John, on the other hand, Jesus has emerged from the purely Jewish phase of being Messiah, or servant of God (which is

lacks all confirmation, defies the texts,

all that Lord or *Son of God*[1] implies in Mark's opening verses). He has become the eternal Logos or Reason, essentially divine and from the beginning with God. Here obviously we are well on our way to a deification of Jesus and an elimination of human traits; and the writer is so conscious of this that he goes out of his way to call our attention to the fact that Jesus was after all a man of flesh and blood, with human parents and real brethren who disbelieved in him. He was evidently conscious that the superimposition on the man Jesus of the Logos scheme, and the reflection back into the human life of Jesus of the heavenly *rôle* which Paul ascribed to him *qua* raised by the Spirit from the dead, was already influencing certain believers (called Docetes) to believe that his human life and actions were illusions, seen and heard indeed, as we see and hear a man speak and act in a dream, but not objective and real. To guard against this John proclaims that he was made flesh. Nevertheless, he goes half way with the Docetes in that he rewrites all the conversations of Jesus, abolishes the homely parable, and substitutes his own theosophic lucubrations. He also emphasizes the miraculous aspect of Jesus, inventing new miracles more grandiose than any in previous gospels, but of a kind, as he imagines, to symbolize his conceptions of sin and death. He is careful to eliminate the demonological stories. They were as much of a stumbling-block to John as we have seen them to be

and rests on an obsolete and absurd allegorization of them

[1] In Mark xv, 39, the utterance of the heathen centurion, "truly this man was a Son of God," can obviously not have been inspired by messianic conceptions; it can have meant no more than that he was more than human, as Damis realized his master Apollonius to be on more than one occasion. Nor can Mark have intended to attribute Jewish conceptions to a pagan soldier.

to Mr. W. B. Smith. We must, therefore, perforce accuse the latter of putting a hypothesis that from the outset is a paradox. The documents contradict him on every page.

Why should the robber chief Joshua have been selected as prototype of Jesus?

A thesis that begins by flying in the face of the documents demands paradoxical arguments for its support; and the pages of all three writers teem with them. Of a Jesus that is God from the first it is perhaps natural to ask—anyhow our authors have asked it of themselves—which God was he? And the accident of his bearing the name Jesus—he might just as well have been called Jacob or Sadoc or Manasseh, or what not—suggests Joshua to them, for Joshua is the Hebrew name which in the LXX was Grecized as *Iesouē*, and later as *Iesous*. That in the Old Testament Joshua is depicted as a cut-throat and leader of brigands, very remote in his principles and practice from the Jesus of the Gospels, counts for nothing. The late Dr. Winckler, who saw sun and moon myths rising like exhalations all around him wherever he looked in ancient history and mythology,[1] has suggested that Joseph was originally a solar hero. *Ergo*, Joshua was one too. *Ergo*, there was a Hebrew secret society in Jerusalem in the period B.C. 150–

[1] For example, he gravely asserts (*Die Weltanschauung des as Alten Orients*, Leipzig, 1904, p. 41) that Saul's melancholy is explicable as a myth of the monthly eclipsing of the moon's light! Perhaps Hamlet's melancholy was of the same mythic origin. A map of the stars is Winckler's, no less than Jensen's, guide to all mythologies. But, to do him justice, Winckler never fell into the last absurdity of supposing that Jews at the beginning of our era were engaged in a secret cult of a Sun-god named Joshua; on the contrary, he declares (*op. cit.*, p. 96), that, just in proportion as we descend the course of time, we approach an age in which the heroes of earlier myth are brought down to the level of earth. This humanization of the Joshua myth was, he held, complete when the book of Joshua was compiled.

A.D. 50 who worshipped the Sun-God-Saviour Joshua. *Ergo*, the Gospels are a sustained parable of this Sun-god. Thus are empty, wild, and unsubstantiated hypotheses piled one on top of the other, like Pelion on Ossa. Not a scintilla of evidence is adduced for any one of them. First one is advanced, and its truth assumed. The next is propped on it, *et sic ad infinitum*.

Why make him the central figure of a monotheistic cult?

What, asks Professor Smith (*Ecce Deus*, p. 67), was the active principle of Christianity? What its germ? "The monotheistic impulse," he answers, "the instinct for unity that lies at the heart of all grand philosophy and all noble religion." Again, p. 45: "What was the essence of this originally secret Jesus cult, that was expressed in such guarded parabolic terms as made it unintelligible to the multitude?.....It was a *protest against idolatry;* it was a *Crusade for monotheism*."

The earliest Christianity was no monotheistic propaganda

This is, no doubt, true of Christianity when we pass outside the Gospels. It is only not true of them, because on their every page Jewish monotheism is presupposed. Why are no warnings against polytheism put into the mouth of Jesus? Why is not a single precept of the Sermon on the Mount directed against idolatry? Surely because we are moving in a Jewish atmosphere in which such warnings were unnecessary. The horizon is purely Jewish, either of Jerusalem as we know it in the pages of Josephus or of certain Galilean circles in which even a knowledge of Greek seems not to have existed before the third century. The very proximity of Greek cities there seems to have confirmed the Jewish peasant of that region in his preference of Aramaic idiom, just as the native of Bohemia to-day turns his back on

you if you address him in the detested German tongue.

Robertson and Drews allow the Jesuists to have been mainly Jewish in cult and feeling

Messrs. Robertson and Drews concede that the original stock of Christianity was Jewish. Thus we read in *Christianity and Mythology* (p. 415) that the Lord's Prayer derives "from pre-Christian Jewish lore, and, like parts of the Sermon (on the Mount), from an actually current Jewish document." The same writer admits (p. 338) the existence of "Judaic sections of the early Church." When he talks (p. 337) of the tale of the anointing of Jesus in Matthew xxvi, 6–13, and parallel passages, being "in all probability a late addendum" to the "primitive gospel" of Bernhard Weiss's theory, "made after the movement had become pronouncedly Gentile," he presupposes that, to start with anyhow, the movement was mainly Jewish. He admits that in the first six paragraphs of the early Christian document entitled the *Didache* we have a purely Jewish teaching document, "which the Jesuist sect adopted in the first or second century." He cannot furthermore contest the fact that the Jesuists "took over the Jewish Scriptures as their sacred book; that they inherited the Jewish passover and the Paschal lamb, which is still slain in Eastern churches; that the leaders of the secret sect in Jerusalem upheld the Jewish rite of circumcision against Paul."[1] All this is inconceivable if the society was not in the main and originally one of Hebrews. When he goes on to argue that the Gospels are the manifesto of a cult of an old Sun-

[1] Cp. p. 342: "In all his allusions to the movement of his day he (Paul) is dealing with Judaizing apostles who preached circumcision." And p. 348: "Paul's Cephas is simply one of the apostles of a Judaic cult that preaches circumcision."

god Joshua, son of a mythic Miriam, he at least admits that the early "Christists" selected from ancient Jewish superstition, and not from pagan myth, the central figure of their cult, and that they chose for their deity a successor and satellite of Moses with a Hebrew lady for his mother. We may take it for granted, then, that the parent society out of which the Christian Church arose was profoundly and radically Jewish; and Mr. Robertson frankly admits as much when he affirms that "it was a *Judaic cult that preached circumcision*," and that "its apostles with whom Paul was in contact were of a *Judaizing* description." Here is common ground between myself and him.

If so, how could they devote themselves to pagan mystery plays?

What I want to know is how it came about that a society of which Jerusalem was the focus, and of which the nucleus and propagandists were Jews and Judaizers, could have been given over to the cult of a solar god, and how they could celebrate mystery plays and dramas in honour of that god; how they can have manufactured that god into "a composite myth" (p. 336), and constructed in his honour a religious system that was "a patchwork of a hundred suggestions drawn from pagan art and ritual usage." For such, we are told (p. 305), was "the Christian system."

Robertson admits that Jews could never borrow from pagan rituals in that age

We are far better acquainted with Jewish belief and ritual during the period B.C. 400–A.D. 100 than we are with that of the pagans. The content of the Greek mysteries is an enigma to our best Hellenists; we know next to nothing of the inside of Mithraism; for the oriental cults of the late Roman republic and early empire we are lamentably deficient in writings that might exhibit to us the *arcana* of their worship and the texture of their beliefs. Not so with Judaism.

Here we have the prophets, old and late; for the two centuries B.C. we have the apocrypha, including the Maccabean books; we have the so-called Books of Enoch, of Jubilees, of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Fourth Ezra, Baruch, Sirach, and many others. We have the voluminous works of Philo and Josephus for the first century of our era; we have the Babylonian and other Talmuds preserving to us a wealth of Jewish tradition and teaching of the first and second centuries. Here let Mr. Robertson speak. As regards the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount, he insists (p. 415 foll.) that they were inspired by parallel passages in the Talmud and the Apocrypha, and he argues with perfect good sense for the priority of the Talmud in these words: "It is hardly necessary to remark here that the Talmudic parallels to any part of the Sermon on the Mount cannot conceivably have been borrowed from the Christian gospels; *they would as soon have borrowed from the rituals of the pagans.*"

Yet affirms that Christists, indistinguishable from Jews, did so borrow wholesale

And yet he asks us to believe that a nucleus of Jews, hidden in Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism, a sect whose apostles were Judaizers and vehement defenders of circumcision—all this he admits—were, as late as the last half of the first century, maintaining among themselves in secret a highly eclectic pagan cult; that they evolved "a gospel myth from scenes in pagan art" (p. 327); that they took a sort of modern archæological interest in pagan art and sculpture, and derived thence most of their literary *motifs;* that the figure of Jesus is an alloy of Dionysus, Osiris, Adonis, Krishna, Æsculapius, and fifty other ancient gods and demigods, with the all-important "Sun-God-Saviour Joshua, son of Miriam"; that the story of Peter rests on "a pagan basis of myth" (p. 340);

that Maria is the true and original form of the Hebrew Miriam, and is the same name as Myrrha and Moira (*μοῖρα*), etc., etc.

The central idea of a God Joshua a figment of Robertson's fancy

Such are the mutually destructive arguments on the strength of which we are to adopt his thesis of the unhistoricity of Jesus. His books, like those of Dr. Drews, are a welter of contradictory statements, unreconciled and irreconcilable. Nevertheless, they reiterate them in volume after volume, like orthodox Christians reiterating articles of faith and dogmas too sacred to be discussed. Who ever heard before them of a Jewish cult of a Sun-God-Saviour Joshua? Such a cult must have been long extinct when the book of Joshua was written. Who ever heard of this Sun-god having for his mother a Miriam, until Mr. Robertson discovered a late Persian gloss to the effect that Joshua, son of Nun, had a mother of the name? Even if this tradition were not so utterly worthless as it is, it would prove nothing about the Sun-god. On the basis of such gratuitous fancies we are asked to dismiss Jesus as a myth. It does not even help us to understand how the myths of the Virgin Birth arose. Since when, I would like to know, did we need such evidence against that legend? If I thought that the rebuttal of it depended on such evidence, I should be inclined to become a good Papist and embrace it. It is enough for me to have ascertained, by a comparison of texts and by a study of early Christian documents, that it is a late accretion on the traditions of Jesus of Nazareth. That is the real evidence, if any be wanted, against it. Mr. Robertson admits that the first two chapters of Luke which are supposed—perhaps wrongly—to embody this legend are "a late fabulous introduction." Again he writes (p. 189):

It does not even explain the birth legends of the Christians

"Only the late Third Gospel tells the story (of Luke i and ii); the narrative (of the Birth) in Matthew, added late as it was to the original composition, which obviously began at what is now the third chapter, has no hint of the taxing."

Evidence of the Protevangelion

This is good sense, and I am indebted to him for pointing out that so loosely was the myth compacted that in the Protevangelion (c. 17) the statement is that it was decreed "that all should be enrolled who were in Bethlehem of Judæa," not all Jews over the entire world.

Robertson assumes the antiquity of the legend merely to suit his theory

Surely all this implies that the legend of the miraculous birth was no part of the earliest tradition about Jesus. Nevertheless, it is so important for Mr. Robertson's thesis (that Jesus was a mythical personage) that he should from the first have had a mythical mother, that he insists on treating the whole of Christian tradition, early or late, as a solid block, and argues steadily that the Virgin Birth legend was an integral part of it from the beginning. Jesus was a myth; as such he must have had a myth for a mother. Now a virgin mother is half-way to being a mythical one. Therefore Mary was a virgin, and must from the beginning have been regarded as such by the "Christists." Such are the steps of his reasoning.

The "Christists" at once extravagantly pagan and extravagantly monotheist and Jewish

I have adduced in the preceding pages a selection of the mythological equations of Mr. Robertson and Dr. Drews in order that my readers may realize how faint a resemblance between stories justifies, in their minds, a derivation or borrowing of one from the other. Nor do they ever ask themselves how Jewish "Christists" were likely to come in contact with out-of-the-way legends of Bacchus or Dionysus, of Hermes,

of old Pelasgic deities, of Cybele and Attis and Isis, Osiris and Horus, of Helena Dendrites, of Krishna, of Janus, of sundry ancient vegetation-gods (for they are up to the newest lights), of Apollonius of Tyana, of Æsculapius, of Herakles and Oceanus, of Saoshyant and other old Persian gods and heroes, of Buddha and his kith and kin, of the Eleusinian and other ancient mysteries. Prick them with a pin, and out gushes this lore in a copious flood; and every item of it is supposed to have filled the heads of the polymath authors of the Christian Gospels. Every syllable of these Gospels, every character in them, is symbolic of one or another of these gods and heroes. Hear, O Israel: "Christians borrowed myths of all kinds from Paganism" (*Christianity and Mythology*, p. xii). And we are pompously assured (p. xxii, *op. cit.*) that this new "mythic" system is, "in general, more 'positive,' more inductive, less *à priori*, more obedient to scientific canons, than that of the previous critics known to me [*i.e.*, to Mr. Robertson] who have reached similar anti-traditional results. It substitutes an anthropological basis, in terms of the concrete phenomena of mythology, for a pseudo-philosophical presupposition." Heaven help the new science of anthropology!

A receipt for the concoction of a gospel

And what end, we may ask, had the "Jesuists" and "Christists" (to use Mr. Robertson's jargon) in view, when they dressed up all this tagrag and bobtail of pagan myth, art, and ritual, and disguised it under the form of a tale of Messianic Judaism? For that and nothing else is, on this theory, the basis and essence of the Gospels. Was it their aim to honour paganism or to honour Jewish monotheism, when they concocted a "Christ cult" which is "a synthesis of the two most

popular pagan myth-motives,[1] with some Judaic elements as nucleus and some explicit ethical teaching superadded" (p. 34). We must perforce suppose that the Gospels were a covert tribute to the worth and value of Pagan mythology and religious dramas, to pagan art and statuary. If we adopt the mythico-symbolical method, they can have been nothing else. Its sponsors might surely condescend to explain the alchemy by which the ascertained rites and beliefs of early Christians were distilled from these antecedents. The effect and the cause are so entirely disparate, so devoid of any organic connection, that we would fain see the evolution worked out a little more clearly. At one end of it we have a hurly-burly of pagan myths, at the other an army of Christian apologists inveighing against everything pagan and martyred for doing so, all within a space of sixty or seventy years. I only hope the orthodox will be gratified to learn that their Scriptures are a thousandfold more wonderful and unique than they appeared to be when they were merely inspired by the Holy Spirit. For verbal inspiration is not, as regards its miraculous quality, in the same field with mythico-symbolism. Verily we have discovered a new literary genus, unexampled in the history of mankind. You rake together a thousand irrelevant thrums of mythology, picked up at random from every age, race, and clime; you get a "Christist" to throw them into a sack and shake them up; you open it, and out come the Gospels. In all the annals of the Bacon-Shakespeareans we have seen nothing like it.

[1] To wit, of a Sun-god, who is also Mithras and Osiris, and of a Vegetation-god annually slain on the sacred tree. We are gravely informed that "not till Dr. Frazer had done his work was the psychology of the process ascertained." Dr. Frazer must be blushing at this tribute to his psychological insight.

Chapter III

THE ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE

Multiplicity of documents converging on and involving an historical Jesus

I have remarked above that if the Gospel of Mark were an isolated writing, if we knew nothing of its fortunes, nothing of any society that accepted it as history; if, above all, we were without any independent documents that fitted in with it and mentioned the persons and events that crowd its pages, then it would be a possible hypothesis that it was like the *Recognitions* of Clement, a skilfully contrived romance. Such a hypothesis, I said, would indeed be improbable, yet not unthinkable or self-destructive. But as a matter of fact we have an extensive series of documents, independent of Mark, yet attesting by their undesigned coincidences its historicity—not, of course, in the sense that we must accept everything in it, but anyhow in the sense that it is largely founded on fact and is a record of real incident. Were it a mere romance of events that never happened, and of people who never lived, would it not be a first-class miracle that in another romance, concocted apart from it and in ignorance of its contents, the same outline of events met our gaze, the same personages, the same atmosphere, moral, intellectual, and religious, the same interests? If in a third and fourth writing the same phenomenon recurred, the marvel would be multiplied. Would any sane person doubt that there was a substratum of fact and real history underlying them all?

It would be as if several tables in the gambling saloon of Monte Carlo threw up the same series of numbers—say, 8, 3, 11, 7, 33, 21—simultaneously and independently of one another. A few of the *habitués*—for Monte Carlo is a great centre of superstition—might take refuge in the opinion that the tables were bewitched; but most men would infer that there was human collusion and conspiracy to produce such a result, and that the croupiers of the several tables were in the plot.

Mark and Q the two earliest documents

Now Mark's Gospel does not stand alone. As I have pointed out in *Myth, Magic, and Morals*, Luke and Matthew hold in solution as it were a second document, called Q (Quelle), or the non-Marcan, which yields us a few incidents and a great many sayings and parables of Jesus. Now this second document, so utterly separate from and independent of Mark that it does not even allude to the crucifixion and death episodes, nevertheless has Jesus all through for its central figure. No doubt it ultimately came out of the same general medium as Mark; but that consideration does not much diminish the weight of its testimony. If I met two people a hundred yards apart both coming from St. Paul's Cathedral, and if they both assured me that they had just been listening to a sermon of Dr. Inge's, I should not credit them the less because they had been together in church.

That both these documents—I mean Mark and the non-Marcan—were in circulation at a fairly early date is certain on many grounds. So great a scholar as Wellhausen, a scholar untrammelled by ties of orthodoxy, shows in his commentary that Mark, as it lies before us, must have been redacted before the

fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; so vague are its forecasts of disasters that were to befall the holy city. In Luke, on the other hand, these forecasts are accommodated to the facts, as we should expect to be the case in an author who wrote after the blow had fallen.

The first and third Gospels constitute two more such documents

And another consideration arises here. Matthew and Luke wrote quite independently of one another—for they practically never join hands across Mark—and yet they both assume in their compilations that these two basal documents, Mark and the non-Marcan, are genuine narratives of real events. They allow themselves, indeed, according to the literary fashion of the age, to re-arrange, modify, and omit episodes in them; but their manner of handling and combining the two documents is in general inexplicable on the hypothesis that they considered them to be mere romances. They are too plainly in earnest, too eager to find in them material for the life of a master whom they revered. Luke in particular prefixes a personal letter to one Theophilus, explaining the purpose of his compilation. In it we find not a word about the transcribing of Osiris dramas. On the contrary, it will set in order for Theophilus a story in which he had already been instructed. It is clear that Theophilus had already been made acquainted with "the facts about Jesus," perhaps insufficiently, perhaps along lines which Luke deprecated. However this be, Luke desires to improve upon the information which Theophilus had so far acquired about Jesus. It is clear that written and unwritten traditions of Jesus were already disseminated among believers. The prologue is inexplicable otherwise, and it implies a whole series of witnesses

Luke's prologue argues an indefinite number more of such documents

to the historicity of Jesus prior to Luke himself, of whom, as I have said, we still have Mark and can reconstruct Q. Both Matthew (whoever he was) and Luke, then, are convinced of the historicity of Jesus, and regarded Mark and Q as historical sources. They exploit them, and they also try to fill up lacunas left in these basal documents, and in particular to supply their readers with some account of his birth and upbringing. Both supplements, of course, are largely fictitious, that of Matthew in particular; but they both testify to a fixed consciousness and belief among early Christians that the Messiah was a real historical person. Such an interest in the birth and up-bringing of Jesus as Matthew and Luke reveal could never have been felt by sectaries who were well aware that he was not a real person, but a solar myth and first cousin of Osiris. Had he been known, even by a few believers and no more, to have been not a man but a composite myth, people would not have craved for details, even miraculous, about his birth and parentage and upbringing. Was it necessary to concoct human pedigrees for a solar myth, and to pretend that Jacob begat Joseph, and Joseph begat Jesus? The very idea is absurd. They wanted such details, and got them, just as did the worshippers of Plato, Alexander, Augustus, Apollonius, and other famous men. In connection with Osiris and Dionysus such details were never asked for and never supplied.

Implications of Luke's exordium

In the covering letter which forms a sort of exordium to his Gospel the following are the words in which Luke assures us that others before himself had planned histories of the life of Jesus :—

> Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have

> been fully established (*or* fulfilled) among us, even as they delivered them unto us which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced out the course of all things accurately from the first, to write them unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed.

This is not the tone of a man who trades in sun-myths. The passage has a thoroughly *bona fide* ring, and declares (1) that Theophilus had already been instructed in the Gospel narrative, but not so accurately as the writer could wish; (2) that several accounts of Jesus's life and teaching were in circulation; (3) that these accounts were based on the traditions of those who had seen Jesus and assisted in the diffusion of his Messianic and other teachings.

The passage cannot be later than A.D. 100, and is probably as early as A.D. 80; many scholars put it earlier. In any case, it reveals a consciousness, stretching far back among believers, that Jesus had really lived and died. Moreover, it is from the pen of one who either had himself visited, with Paul, James the brother (or, according to the orthodox, the half-brother) of Jesus at Jerusalem (Acts xxi, 17), or —if not that—anyhow had in his possession and made copious use of a travel document written by the companion of Paul.

Luke probably used a document independent of Mark and Q

A study of Luke also suggests that he had a third narrative document of his own. Thus, without going outside the Synoptic Gospels, we have two, if not three, wholly independent accounts of the doings and sayings of Jesus, and an inferential certainty that they were not the only ones which then existed. In the earliest Christian writers, moreover, citations

occur that cannot well be referred to the canonical Gospels, but which may very well have been taken from the other narratives which Luke assures us were in the possession of the earliest Church. These narratives, like all other wholly or partly independent documents, must have differed widely from one another in detail; for their authors probably handled the tradition as freely as Matthew and Luke handle Mark. But the inspiring motive of them all was the belief that a human Messiah had founded, or rather begun, the community of believers in Palestine. That any of them were contemporary is improbable, for the simple reason that the eyes of believers were turned, not backward on the life of the herald, but forward to the Kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven on earth which he heralded. They all felt themselves to be living in the last days, and that the Kingdom was to surprise many of them during their lifetime. Nor among the earliest believers was this expectation confined to Jews alone; it extended equally to Gentile converts. Thus Paul, in his epistles to the Corinthians, labours to answer the pathetic query his converts had addressed to him—namely, why the kingdom to come so long delayed; why many of them had fallen sick and some had died, while yet it tarried. Men and women who breathed such an atmosphere of tense expectation, as a passage like this and as the Gospel parables reveal, could not be solicitous for annals of the past. Still less is the attitude revealed that of people nurtured on ritual dramas of an annually slain and annually resuscitated god; for in that case they only needed to wait for the manifestation they yearned for, until the following spring, when the god would rise afresh to secure

Messianic and apocalyptic character of these early documents

salvation for his votaries. The tone of this passage of Paul, as of all the earliest Christian documents, shows that the mind's eye of the common believer, as had been the founder's, was dazzled with the apocalyptic splendours soon to be revealed, with the beatitudes shortly to be fulfilled in the faithful. They were as wayfarers walking in a dark night towards a light which is far off, yet, because of its brightness and of the lack of an interposed landscape to fix the perspective, seems close at hand. Many a Socialist workman, especially on the continent, cherishes a similar dream of a good time coming ere long for himself and his fellows. He has no sense of the difficulties which for many a weary year—perhaps for ever—will hinder the realization of his passionately desired ideal. It is better so, for we live by our enthusiasms, and are the better for having indulged in them; if the labourer had none, he would be a chilly, useless being. Happily the Socialist seldom reflects how commonplace he would probably find his ideal if it were suddenly realized around him. Such were the eschatological hopes and dreams rife in the circles among which the Synoptic Gospels and their constituent documents first saw the light; they are revealed on their every page, and, needless to say, are inexplicable on Mr. Robertson's hypothesis. Devoid of sympathy with his subject, incapable of seeing it against its true background, without tact or perspective, he has never felt or understood the difficulties which beset his central hypothesis. He therefore attempts no explanation of them.

Character of the Fourth Gospel

Of the Fourth Gospel I have already said whatever is strictly necessary in this connection. It hangs together with the Johannine epistles; and its writer

certainly had the Gospel of Mark before him, for he derives many incidents from it, and often covertly controverts it. It seems to belong to the end of the first century, and was in the hands of Gnostic sects fairly early in the second—say about 128. When it was written, the *Gnosis* of the Hellenized Jews, and in especial of Philo, was invading the primitive community. The Messianic and human traits of Jesus, still so salient in Mark and Matthew, though less so in Luke, are receding into the background before the opinion that he had been the representation in flesh of the eternal Logos. All his conversations are re-written to suit the newer standpoint; the homely scenes and surroundings of Galilee are forgotten as much as can be, and Samaria and Jerusalem —a more resounding theatre—are substituted. The teaching in parables is dropped, and we hear no more of the exorcisms of devils. Such things were unedifying, and unworthy of so sublime a figure, as much in the mind of this evangelist as of the fastidious Professor W. B. Smith. Hence it may be said that the Fourth Gospel has made the fortune of the Catholic Church; without it Athanasius could never have triumphed, nor the Nicene Creed have been penned, nor Professor Smith's diatribes have attracted readers. For in it Jesus is becoming unreal, a divine pedant masquerading in a vesture of flesh. When it was written, the Docetes, as they were called, were already beginning to dot the "i's" and cross the "t's" of the teachers who sublimated Jesus into the Philonian Logos; and, as I said above, it is against them, no doubt, that the *caveat*—so necessary in the context—is entered that in Jesus *the Word was made flesh*. Similarly, in the Johannine epistles certain

It is half-docetic

teachers are denounced who declared that Jesus Christ had not come *in the flesh*, and taught that his flesh was only a blind. We have a fairly full account of these docetic teachers in the Epistles of Ignatius, which cannot be much later than A.D. 120. From these we gather that they adopted the ordinary tradition about Jesus, and believed that he had been born, and eaten and drunk, had walked about with his disciples, had delivered his teaching by word of mouth, had been crucified by Pontius Pilate, had died, and been buried. But all these operations had been unreal and subjective in the minds of those who were present at them, as are things we see in a dream. They had taken place to the eye and ear of bystanders, but not in reality. The partizans, therefore, of the view that Jesus never lived deceive themselves when they appeal to the Docetes as witnesses on their side. The Docetes lend no colour to their thesis of the non-historicity of Jesus, but just the opposite. Drews writes (p. 57) that

Ignatius's account of Docetism

> the Gnostics of the second century really questioned the historical existence of Jesus by their docetic conception; in other words, they believed only in a metaphysical and ideal, not an historical and real, Christ. The whole polemic of the Christians against the Gnostics was based essentially on the fact that the Gnostics denied the historicity of Jesus, or at least put it in a subordinate position.

Drews misunderstands Gnosticism

This is nonsense. The Docetes admitted to the full that the Messiah had appeared on earth; but, partly to meet the Jewish objections to a crucified Messiah, and partly inspired by that contempt for matter which was and is common in the East, and has been the inspiring motive of much vain asceticism, they shrank from believing that he shared with ordinary men

their flesh and blood, their secretions and evacuations. Matter was too evil for a Messiah, much more for the heavenly *Logos*, to have been encased in it, and so subjected to its dominion; to ascribe real flesh to him was to humble him before the evil Demiurge, who created matter. The Docetes accordingly took refuge in the idea that his body was a phantom, and that in phantom form he had undergone all that was related of him in Christian tradition; to which their views bear testimony, instead of contradicting it, as Dr. Drews and his friends pretend. "If these things," writes Ignatius, "were done by our Lord in Semblance, then am I also a prisoner in semblance." This means that—*mutatis mutandis*—the arguments of the Docetes would turn Ignatius too, chains and all, into a phantom. Again and again this writer affirms that the Docetes believed quite correctly that Jesus was born of a virgin and baptized by John, was nailed up for our sakes under Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch, that he suffered, died, and raised himself up out of the grave. They only would not believe that he underwent and performed all this *truly*—that is, objectively. They insisted that the Saviour had only been among men as a phantom, in the same manner as Helen had gone through the siege of Troy as a mere phantom. She was not really there, though Greeks and Trojans saw and met her daily. She was all the time enjoying herself amid the asphodel meadows of the Nile. Even so the disciples, according to the Docetes, had heard and seen Jesus all through his ministry; yet the body they saw was phantasmal only. The Docetes also argued—so we can infer from Ignatius's Epistle to the Church of Smyrna—that, as Jesus ate and drank

Docetes accepted current Christian tradition

after the resurrection in phantom guise, so he had eaten and drunk before his death in no other than phantom guise. The answer of Ignatius to this is: "I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection"; and he forthwith relates how the risen Jesus approached Peter and his company, who thought they were in the presence of a phantom or ghost, and said to them: "*Lay hold and handle me, and see that I am not a demon without a body.*" Everything, then, that we read about the Docetes shows that on all points, in respect of the miraculous incidents of Jesus's life no less than of the natural, they blindly accepted the record of evangelical tradition. Their heresy was not to deny what the tradition related, but to interpret it wrongly. Philo had long before set the example of such an interpretation, when in his commentaries, which were widely read by Christians in the second century, he asserted that the angels who appeared to Abraham at the oak of Mambre, and ate and drank with him, only ate and drank in semblance, and not in reality. They laid a spell on the eyes of Abraham, and of the other guests at the banquet. So in the Book of Tobit xii, 20, 21, the angel says: "All these days did I appear unto you; and I did neither eat nor drink, but it was a vision ye yourselves saw."

Docetism in Philo,

and in Tobit

In the same way, Jesus laid a spell on the eyes of his followers, in the belief of this very early sect of Christian believers. Professor W. B. Smith, like his two companions, writes as if Docetism were an asset in favour of his thesis that Christianity began as the cult of a slain God, and that "the humanization of this divinity proceeds apace as we descend the stream of tradition." Yet the Docetic doctrine, as given in the

Professor Smith and Hippolytus

report of Hippolytus, and adduced by Mr. Smith himself (p. 88), exactly bears out the estimate of its import with which one rises from a study of the Ignatian Epistles. It is from Hippolytus's *Refutation of Heresies*, viii, 10, and runs thus:—

> Having come from above, he (Jesus) put on the begotten (body), and *did all things just as has been written in the Gospels;* he washed himself in Jordan, etc.

Hippolytus was in contact with Docetes, and familiar with their writings and arguments. What better proof could we have than this citation of the fact that they servilely adopted the traditions of Jesus recorded in the Gospels? They were not supplying an answer to imaginary Jews who had objected to Christianity on the score that Jesus had never lived. Their speciality was to interpret the Gospel record, which they did not dream of disputing, along phantasmagoric lines. There was still left in the Church enough common sense and historic insight to brush their interpretation on one side as nonsensical.

Drews misunderstands Justin Martyr

Drews once more has conjured up out of Justin Martyr a Jew of the second century who denied the human existence of Jesus. The relevant passage is at p. 16 of his *Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus*, and runs as follows:—

> It is not true, however, as has recently been stated, that no Jew ever questioned the historical reality of Jesus, so that we may see in this some evidence for his existence. The Jew Trypho, whom Justin introduces in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, expresses himself very sceptically about it. "Ye follow an empty rumour," he says, "and make a Christ for yourselves." "If he was born and lived somewhere, he is entirely unknown" (viii, 3). This work appeared in the second half of the second century; it is there-

fore the first indication of a denial of the human existence of Jesus, and shows that such opinions were current at the time.

Professor Drews has, I regret to say, failed to read his text intelligently. So I will transcribe the passage of Justin in full, premising that it was more probably written in the first than in the second half of the second century. The dialogue is between a Jew and an ex-Platonist who has turned Christian, and the Jew says with an ironical smile to the Christian:—

> The rest of your arguments I admit, and I admire your religious enthusiasm. Nevertheless, you would have done better to stick to Plato's or any other sage's philosophy, practising the virtues of endurance and continence and temperance, rather than let yourself be ensnared by false arguments and follow utterly worthless men. For if you had remained loyal to that form of philosophy and lived a blameless life, there was left a hope of your rising to something better. But as it is you have abandoned God and put your trust in man, so what further hope is left to you of salvation? If, then, you are willing to take advice from myself—for I already have come to regard you as a friend—begin first by circumcising yourself, and next keep in the legal fashion the sabbath and the festivals and the new moons of God, and in a word fulfil all the commandments written in the Law, and then perhaps you will attain unto God's mercy. But Messiah (*or* Christ), even supposing he has come into being and exists somewhere or other, *is unrecognized, and can neither know himself as such nor possess any might, until* Elias having come shall anoint him and make him manifest unto all. But you (Christians), having lent ear to a vain report, feign a sort of Messiah unto yourselves, and for his sake are now rashly going to perdition.

There is a parallel passage in the Dialogue, c. cx,

where the Christian interlocutor, after reciting the prophecy of Micah, iv, 1–7, adds these words:—

> I am quite aware, gentlemen, that your rabbis admit all the words of the above passage to have been uttered about, and to refer to the Messiah; and I also know that they deny him so far to have come, or, if they say he has come, then that it is not yet known who he is. However, when he is manifested and in glory, then, they say, it will be known who he is. And then, so they say, the things foreshadowed in the above passage will come to pass.

The Jews in Justin testify to Jesus's historicity

The sense, then, of the passage adduced by Drews is perfectly clear, and exactly the opposite of that which he puts upon it. The Christ or Messiah referred to by the Jew is not that man of Nazareth in whom the Christians had falsely recognized the signs of Messiahship. No, he is, on the contrary, the Messiah expected by the Jews; but the latter has not so far come; or, if he has come, still lurks in some corner unrecognized until such time as Elias, to whom the *rôle* appertains, shall appear again and proclaim him. There is not a word of Jesus of Nazareth not having come, or of his being still unrecognized. The gravamen of the Jew is that the ex-Platonist had been chicaned by Christians into believing that the Messiah *had already come* in the person of Jesus, and had been recognized in him. The passage, therefore, has exactly the opposite bearing to what Drews imagines.

Second century Jews did not detest mere shadows

There is, too, another very significant point to be made in this connection. It is this, that the Jews of that age would not have borne the bitter grudge they did against the Christians if the latter had merely devoted themselves to the cult of a mythical personage, a Sun-God-Saviour, who never existed at all. They

were quite well capable of ridiculing myths of such a kind, as the story of Bel and the Dragon shows. Jesus, however, was a real memory to them, and one which they detested. Their hatred for him was that which you bear for a man who has upset your religion and trampled on your prejudices—the sort of hatred that Catholics have for the memory of Luther and Calvin; it was not in any way akin to their mockery of idols, their disgust for the demons that inhabited them, their abhorrence of their votaries. It was hatred of a religious antagonist, *odium theologicum* of the purest kind, and hatred like that with which the Ebionites for generations hated the memory of Paul. Jesus had violated and set at naught the law of Moses. A solar myth could not do that.

To this hatred of the Jews for the memory of Jesus, and to the early date at which it showed itself, Dr. Drews himself bears witness when, on p. 12 of the work cited, he writes as follows:—

> There is no room for doubt that after the destruction of Jerusalem, and especially *during the first quarter of the second century, the hostility of the Jews and Christians increased;* indeed, by the year 130 the hatred of the Jews for the Christians became so fierce that a rabbi whose niece had been bitten by a serpent preferred to let her die rather than see her healed "in the name of Jesus."

Chwolson on early Rabbis

Chwolson argues from this and similar passages that the Rabbis of the second half of the first century, or the beginning of the second, were well acquainted with the *person* of Christ. "Here," says Drews, "he clearly deceives himself and his readers if the impression is given that they had any personal knowledge of him." The self-deception is surely on the part of Dr. Drews. Chwolson does not imply that any

Rabbis of the years 50–100 had a personal knowledge of Jesus, in the sense of having seen him or conversed with him; for he is not given to writing nonsense. He does, however, imply that they knew of him as a real man who had lived and done them a power of evil. If they had only known him as a solar myth, their hostility to his followers, admitted by Drews, would be inexplicable; equally inexplicable if, as Dr. W. B. Smith contends, he had been a merely heavenly power, a divine Logos or God, incidentally the object of a monotheist cult. In that case the Jews would rather have been inclined to fall on the neck of the Christians and welcome them; and their cult would have been no more offensive to them than the theosophy of Philo the Jew, from which it would have been hardly distinguishable. Justin Martyr furthermore makes statements on this point which perfectly agree with the story of the hostile Rabbi adduced by Drews. Not in one, but in half-a-dozen, passages he testifies that in his day the Jews in all their synagogues, at the conclusion of their prayers, cursed the memory of Jesus, execrated his name and personality (for *name* meaned *personality* in that age), and poured ridicule on the *soi-disant* Messiah that had been crucified by the Romans. "Even to this day," Justin exclaims (ch. xciii), "you persevere in your wickedness, imprecating curses on us because we can prove that he whom you crucified is Messiah." He records (ch. cviii) "that the Jews chose and appointed emissaries whom they sent forth all over the world to proclaim that a godless heresy and unlawful had been vamped up by a certain Jesus, a charlatan of Galilee. They were to warn their compatriots that the disciples had stolen him

In the Jewish synagogues Jesus was regularly execrated

out of the tomb in which, after being unnailed from the cross, he had been laid, and then pretended that he had been raised from the dead and ascended into heaven."

Eusebius's evidence on this point

At first sight the above is a mere *réchauffé* of Matt. xxviii, 13; but Eusebius, who had in his hands much first- and second-century literature of the Christians and Hellenized Jews that we have not, attests a similar tradition, and declares that he found it in the publications of the ancients.[1]

> The priests and elders of the Jewish race who lived in Jerusalem wrote epistles and sent them broadcast to the Jews everywhere among the Gentiles, calumniating the teaching of Christ as a brand-new heresy and alien to God; and they warned them by letters not to receive it. And their apostles took their epistles, written on papyrus.....and ran up and down the earth, maligning our account of the Saviour. .....It is still the custom of the Jews to give the name of Apostles to those who carry encyclical letters from their rulers.

Note that Eusebius does not weave in the story of the disciples stealing their Master's body from out of the tomb. From his omission of it, and from the dissimilarity of his language, we can infer that the "publications of the ancients" from which he derived his information were not the works of Justin, but an independent source, which may also have been in Justin's hands. In any case, the Jews were not given to tilting at windmills; their secular and bitter hatred of the very name of Jesus, the relentless war waged with pen and sword from the first between the Chris-

[1] Euseb., in *Esai*, xviii, 1 foll., p. 424, foll. The words might mean Justin; but when he quotes Justin he always gives his name. The Gospels cannot be intended.

tians and themselves—all this is attested by the earliest writings of the Church. It already colours Luke's Gospel, and is a leading inspiration of the Johannine. It alone is all-sufficient to dissipate the hypotheses of these twentieth-century fabulists.

Evidence of Acts

Let us turn to the Acts of the Apostles, the only book of the New Testament which contains a history of the Apostolic age. In the last half of this book is embedded, as even Van Manen admitted, a travel document or narrative of voyage undertaken by its author in common with Paul. Whether or no the fellow-traveller was the compiler of the Third Gospel and of Acts is not certain; but he was assuredly a man named Luke. It does not matter. "It is not," writes Dr. Drews (*Christ Myth*, p. 19),

> the imagined historical Jesus, but, if anyone, Paul, who is that "great personality" that called Christianity into life as a new religion; and the depth of his moral experience gave it the strength for its journey, the strength which bestowed upon it victory over the other competing religions. Without Jesus the rise of Christianity can be quite well understood; without Paul, not so.

We infer from the above that, on the whole, Drews accepts the narrative of Paul's sayings and doings as given in Acts, and does not consider it a mere record of the feats a solar hero performed, not on earth, but in heaven. We gather also that Mr. Robertson takes the same indulgent view of Acts, for he frequently impugns the age of the Pauline epistles and the evidence they contain on the strength of "Van Manen's thesis of the non-genuineness" of them. "In point of fact," he writes (p. 453), "Van Manen's whole case is an argument; Dr. Carpenter's is a simple declaration."

Van Manen on Acts and Paul

But Van Manen never for a moment questioned the historical reality of Jesus. What he insisted upon is[1] that

> there is no word, nor any trace, of any essential difference as regards faith and life between Paul and other disciples.....He is a "disciple" among the "disciples." What he preaches is substantially nothing else than what their mind and heart are full of—the things concerning Jesus.

Van Manen, however, allows

> that Paul's journeyings, his protracted sojourn outside of Palestine, his intercourse in foreign parts with converted Jews and former heathen, may have emancipated him (as it did so many other Jews of the Dispersion) without his knowing it, more or less—perhaps in essence completely—from circumcision and other Jewish religious duties, customs, and rites.

Concerning Paul the same writer says (*op. cit.*, art, "Paul") that Acts gives us

> a variety of narratives concerning him, differing in their dates, and also in respect of the influences under which they were written.....With regard to Paul's journeys, we can in strictness speak with reasonable certainty and with some detail only of one great journey, which he undertook towards the end of his life. (Acts xvi, 10–17; xx, 5–15; xxi, 1–18; xxvii, 1–xxviii, 16.)

Evidence of the *we* sections of Acts

It is upon Acts, then, that Van Manen bases his estimate, which we just now cited, of Paul's relations with the other disciples. He refuses, and rightly, "to assume that Acts must take a subordinate place in comparison with the principal epistles of Paul." In effect, his assault on the Pauline Epistles rests on the assumption that the record of Paul's activity presented in Acts is the more trustworthy wherever

[1] *Encycl. Bibl.*, art, "Paul."

it appears to conflict with the Pauline Epistles, and in particular with Galatians. In accepting Van Manen's conclusion, Mr. Robertson implicitly accepts his premises, one of which is the superior reliability of Acts in general, and in particular of the four sections enumerated above, and characterized by the use of the word "we." For the moment, therefore, let us confine ourselves to the ninety-seven verses of these "we" sections, which are obviously from the pen of a fellow-traveller of Paul. We find it recorded in them that Paul was moved by a *vision* to go and *preach the Gospel*[1] in Macedonia; that at Philippi a certain woman named Lydia, who already *worshipped God—i.e.*, was a heathen converted to Jewish monotheism—had opened her heart in consequence to give heed to the things spoken by Paul. We infer that Paul's Gospel supplemented in some way her monotheism. She and her household became something more than mere worshippers of God, and were *baptized*. We learn that Paul and his companion reckoned time by the Jewish feasts and fasts—*e.g.*, by the days of unleavened bread—but at the same time were in the habit of meeting together with the rest of the faithful on the first day of the week, in order to break bread and discourse about the faith. At Tyre, as at Troas, they found "disciples" who, like Paul, arranged future events, or were warned of them *through the Spirit*. At Cæsarea, of Palestine, they stayed with *Philip the evangelist*, who was one of *the seven*, and had four daughters—*virgins who did prophesy*. They also met there a certain *prophet Agabus*, who was a mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost,

[1] Words italicized in the sequel are citations of the text of Acts.

and as such foretold that the Jews at Jerusalem, of whose plots against Paul we elsewhere hear in these sections, would *deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.* Paul, in his turn, declares his readiness to be bound and die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. At Cyprus they stay with *an early disciple,* Mnason, and, on reaching Jerusalem, *the brethren received them* gladly. And the day following *Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders* (of the Church) *were present.* Paul relates to them the facts of his *ministry among the Gentiles.* In the course of the final voyage to Rome, when all the crew have despaired of their lives, because of the violence of the storm and of the ship leaking, Paul comes to the rescue, and informs them that the angel of the God whom he served, and whose he was, had stood by him in the night, saying: "*Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Cæsar.*" He therefore could not perish by shipwreck, nor they either. In Melita the trivial circumstance that the bite of a viper, promptly shaken off by him into the fire, did not cause Paul to swell up (*i.e.*, his hand to be inflamed), or die, caused the barbarians to acclaim him as a god; and in the sequel the sick in the island flock to him, and are healed. At Puteoli Paul and his companion find *brethren,* as they had found them at Jerusalem and elsewhere; and presently they enter Rome.

In these sections, then, we have glimpses of a brotherhood disseminated all about the Mediterranean whose members were Monotheists of the Jewish type, but something besides, in so far as they accepted a *gospel* which Paul also preached, about a Lord Jesus Christ; these brethren solemnly broke bread on the first day of the week. In these sections we breathe

the same atmosphere of personal visions, of angels, of prophecy, of direct inspiration of individuals by the Holy Ghost, of the cult of virginity, which we breathe in the rest of Acts and throughout the Pauline Epistles. We meet also with a Philip, an *evangelist*, and *one of the seven*. Who were the seven? We turn to an earlier chapter of Acts,[1] and read that in the earliest days of the religion at Jerusalem, in order to satisfy the claims of the widows of Greek Jews who were neglected in the daily ministration, the *twelve apostles* had called together the multitude of the faithful, and chosen *seven men* of good report, *full of the Spirit* and of wisdom to *serve the tables*, because they, the Twelve, were too busy preaching the word to attend to the catering of the new Messianic society. The first on the list of these seven deacons was *Stephen*, the second *Philip*. When, therefore, in the later passage the fellow-traveller of Paul refers to Philip as one of *the seven*, he assumes that we know who *the seven* were; and he can only expect us to know it because we have read the earlier chapter which narrates their appointment. The fellow-traveller of Paul, therefore, was aware of the appointment of the seven deacons, and testifies thereto. Here we have irrefragable evidence of the historicity of verses 1–6 of chapter vi of Acts, and at the same time a strong presumption that the fellow-traveller of Paul was himself the redactor, if not the author, of the earlier chapters (i–xv) of Acts, as he is obviously of the last half (ch. xvi to end); for that

Philip one of the seven

[1] I expect Dr. Drews and Mr. Robertson, in their next editions, to broach the view that the earlier chapter was forged to explain the later one, and that in the later one "The Seven" are a cryptic reference to the Pleiades.

last half coheres inseparably with the contiguous *we* sections.

Literary unity of Acts

Have we, then, any way of testing this presumption that the fellow-traveller who penned these *we* sections also penned the rest of Acts? We have, though it is one which can only appeal to trained philologists, and I doubt if Messrs. Drews and Robertson are likely to give to such an argument its due weight. The linguistic evidence of the *we* sections has been sifted and tested by Sir John Hawkins in his *Horæ Synopticæ*. The statistic of words and phrases cannot lie. It proves that the writer of Acts, and consequently of the Third Gospel, "was from time to time a companion of Paul in his travels, and that he simply and naturally wrote in the first person when narrating events at which he had been present."

This is the best hypothesis which a study of the language of Acts and of the Third Gospel permits us to accept. I do not say it is the only possible one, and I expect Mr. Robertson and his pupil, Dr. Drews, to reject it with scorn, for their philology is of the sort which recognizes in Maria the same name as *Moira* and Myrrha. The only other explanations of the presence of *we* in these sections are, either that a compiler who used the diary of the fellow-traveller left it standing in the document when he embodied it in his narrative, through carelessness and by accident, or else that he left it of set design, and because he wished his readers to identify him with the older reporter, and so to pass for a companion of Paul. The first of these explanations is very improbable; the second not only much too subtle, but out of keeping with the babbling, but credulous, honesty which everywhere shows itself in Acts.

It is true that Van Manen assumes *a priori*, and without a shadow of proof, that Luke and Acts were written as late as the period 125–150. His only argument is that Marcion already had the former in his hands as early as 140; and he is prone to make the childish assumption that the date of composition of any book in the New Testament is exactly that of its earliest ascertainable use by a later author. Such a mode of reasoning is utterly false and uncritical, and would, if applied in other fields, prove that the great mass of ancient literature was not ancient at all, but composed in the tenth or later centuries to which our earliest MSS. belong; for we have no citations either in contemporary or in nearly contemporary writers of nine-tenths of the whole volume of the old Greek and Latin literatures. Most of it, if we applied Van Manen's canons of evidence (which, of course, are accepted and improved upon by the three writers I am criticizing), would turn out to have been written as late as the renaissance of European learning. It is a fallacious test, and Van Manen would have shrunk from the paradox of enforcing it in regard to any other literature than the New Testament. It would appear as if the orthodox traditionalists, by insisting that the Bible must not be judged and criticized like other books, have prejudiced not merely their own cause—that would not matter—but the cause of sober history. They have invested it with such an atmosphere of mystery and falsetto, with what I may call a Sunday-school atmosphere, that a certain class of inquirers rush to an opposite extreme, and insist on canons of evidence and authenticity which would, if consistently used, eliminate all ancient literature and history. One form of error provokes the other.

Van Manen's system of dating Luke and Acts would postpone all ancient literature to the Middle Ages

Ephrem's commentary on Acts

We have examined for their evidence as regards the Early Church those sections which directly evidence the hand of a companion of Paul, who was probably Luke the physician, seeing that tradition was unanimous in ascribing the Third Gospel and Acts to him. Some scholars have observed that the old Syriac version cited by Ephrem the Syrian in his commentary[1] on Acts read in Acts xx, 13, as follows: "But *I, Lucas, and those with me*, going before to the ship, set sail for Assos," where the conventional text reads: "But *we*, going before." The pronoun *we* in this passage cannot include, as it usually does, Paul, who had taken another route and had left directions that they should call for him; this may have led Ephrem to substitute the paraphrase *I, Lucas, and those with me*. Anyhow, without further evidence, we can hardly use Ephrem's citation as a proof of the Lucan authorship of Acts. But we must anyhow consider the evidence as to Paul's beliefs which is to be gathered from the sections of Acts which immediately cohere with the travel document, and which clearly depended for their information on a source closely allied to them and of the same age and provenance. Firstly, then, it is noticeable that all this last part of Acts is relatively free from the fabulous details which mar the earlier part descriptive of the exploits of Peter. Next we note that Paul, on entering a city, goes straight to the Jewish Synagogue, and that the gospel with which he undertakes to supplement their monotheism consisted not of tidings about an ancient Palestinian Sun-god named Joshua, or Dionysus or Krishna, or Osiris, or Æsculapius, or

Evidence of those parts of Acts which cohere with the *we* sections

[1] The relevant part of this commentary is preserved in an old Armenian version of which we have ancient MSS.

Mithras, nor about a vegetation or harvest demon of any kind, nor about any of the other members of the Christian pandemonium invented by Mr. Robertson and adopted by Dr. Drews. No; on the contrary, at Thessalonica Paul spent three sabbaths trying to convince the Jews in their synagogue that Jesus must have been the Jewish Messiah promised in the Jewish scriptures, because in accordance with prophecy he had suffered and risen from the dead. That he taught them, further, that Jesus, *qua* Christ or Messiah, was also the Jewish king whose advent they looked for, is obvious from the fact that he was accused on this occasion, as on others, of teaching, "contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, that there was another king, one Jesus." At Corinth Paul found he was wasting time in trying to persuade the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah whose advent they expected; and he declared to them that thenceforth he would devote himself to spreading his good news among the Gentiles. None the less he persisted, wherever he afterwards went, in going first to the synagogue, so as to give his compatriots a prior chance of accepting his spiritual wares, according to the principle enunciated in his epistles, that the promises were for the Jews first and only after them for the Gentiles. In Acts xxv, 19, Festus lays before King Agrippa the case against Paul as he had learned it from the Jewish priests and elders at Jerusalem. It amounted to this, that Paul affirmed that "one Jesus, who was dead, was really alive." We learn in an earlier passage that Paul was a Jew of Tarsus, an adherent of the Pharisaic sect which believed in a general resurrection of good Jews, that nevertheless he had persecuted the adherents of Jesus of Nazareth and

connived at the murder of Stephen. He has some difficulty in convincing the Roman governor of Judæa that he is not a leader of the Jewish *sicarii*, or sect of assassins, who were ever anxious to range themselves on the side of any Messiah ready to show fight against the Roman Legions. The impression made on Festus, the Roman Governor, by Paul's prophetic arguments about a Messiah who had suffered and then risen from the dead was (Acts xxvi, 24) that "much learning had made him mad." We can discern all through this last half of Acts that attitude of Paul to Jesus which confronts us in his epistles. Nothing interests him except his death on the cross and his resurrection. Of the rest of his career we learn nothing. In one passage, ch. xiii, 26 foll., we have a slightly more detailed account of the staple of Paul's teaching, as delivered to the Jews when he encountered them in their synagogues. He informed them of how "they that dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers" had condemned Jesus; "though they found no cause of death in him, yet asked they of Pilate that he should be slain." They afterwards "took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead: and he was seen for many days of them that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses unto the people."

There is not much of a vegetation-god story about the above concise narrative, which, however, is strikingly independent of the Gospel legends concerning the burial and resurrection of Jesus; for, according to them, it was the friends and adherents of Jesus, and not the rulers, who condemned him, that were careful to bury him; and his post-resurrectional

appearances are here confined to his Galilean followers, who, by virtue of their longer association and intimacy with him, would be more likely than others to see him after death in dreams and visions.

Six independent and early documents involve a real Jesus

I have now reviewed the historical books of the New Testament. We have in them at least six monuments—to wit, Mark, the non-Marcan document, the parts of the First and Third Gospels peculiar to their authors, the Fourth Gospel, and the history of Paul and his mission given in chapters xiii to xxviii of Acts. Perhaps I ought to add the first twelve chapters of Acts, of which the information, according to Van Manen, was derived from an early and lost document, the Acts of Peter. That would make seven monuments. Unless all philological analysis is false, the Third Gospel and Acts are from the pen of a companion of Paul, and cannot be set later than about 90 A.D. Mark, which he used, must be indefinitely earlier, and I have pointed out that there are good reasons for setting its date before the year 70. The non-Marcan document, which critics have agreed to call Q (Quelle), cannot be later than Mark, and is probably much earlier, judging from the fact that it as yet reported no miracles of Jesus, nor hints of his death and resurrection. Now all these documents are independent of one another in style and contents, yet they all have a common interest—namely, the memory of a historical man Jesus; and such data as they isolatedly afford about Jesus agree on the whole as closely as any profane documents ever agreed which, being written independently and from very different standpoints, yet refer to one and the same person. If we see a number of convergent rays of light streaming down under clouds across a widely

extended landscape, we infer a central sun behind the clouds by which they are all emitted. Similarly, we have here several traditions and documents which converge on a single man, and are all and severally meaningless, and their genesis impossible of explanation unless we assume that he lived. It is sufficiently incredible that one tradition should (to take the hypothesis of non-historicity in its most rational form — that, namely, of Professor W. B. Smith) allegorize the myth of a Saviour God as the career of a man, and that man a Galilean teacher, in whose humanity the Church believed from the first. That six or seven parallel traditions should all have hit on the same form of deception and allegory is, as I said before, as incredible as that several roulette tables at Monte Carlo should independently and at one and the same time throw up an identical series of numbers. *Credat Judæus Apella.* These writers who develop the thesis of the non-historicity of Jesus because miracles came to be attributed to him—how could they not in that age and social medium?—ask us to believe in a miracle which far outweighs any which any religionists ever reported of their founder; they themselves have fallen into fathomless depths of credulity.

Chapter IV

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

Now let us turn to the Epistles of Paul, a person whom these writers, as we have seen above, admit to have lived, and to have played no small part in the establishment of Christianity.

Mr. Robertson's vital interpolations

In using these Epistles, they all three make a reservation to the effect that any evidence which they may supply in favour of the historicity of Jesus, and which cannot be explained away, shall be regarded as an interpolation; and as it is something that slays his hypothesis, Mr. Robertson has taught us to call such evidence "vital interpolation." It must die in order that his hypothesis may live. They also claim, *ab initio*, to deny Pauline authorship to any epistles that may turn out to be a stumbling-block in the way of their theories, and lean to the view of Van Manen and others, who held that the entire mass of the Pauline letters are the "work of a whole school of second-century theologians"—in other words, forgeries of the period 130–140. They would, of course, set them later than that, only it is overwhelmingly certain that Marcion made about that time a collection of ten of them, which he expurgated to suit his views, and arranged in order, with Galatians first; this collection he called the *Apostolicon*. It runs somewhat counter to this view that, twenty years earlier, we already have a reference to these Epistles in

Defying textual evidence he relegates the Paulines to second century

Ignatius, who, with an exaggeration hardly excused by the fact that he is addressing members of the Ephesian Church, informs us that the Ephesians are mentioned "in every letter" by Paul. Those who desire ample proof that Ignatius was well acquainted with Paul's Epistles cannot do better than refer to a work, drawn up and published in 1905 by members of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology, entitled *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*. In this the New Testament originals and the citations are arranged in parallel columns in the order of their convincingness.

Professor Smith's kindred thesis offends the facts

At a still earlier date—say A.D. 95—Clement of Rome cites the Paulines. As Professor W. B. Smith makes Herculean efforts to show that he did not, I venture to set before my readers a passage—chap. xxxv, 5, 6 of his *Epistle* face to face with Romans i, 29–32—so that they may judge for themselves. I print identical words in leaded type:—

1 Clement.	*Romans.*
ἀπορριψαντες ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν πᾶσαν ἀδικίαν καὶ ἀνομίαν, πλεονεξίαν, ἔρεις, κακοηθείας τε καὶ δόλους ψιθυρισμούς τε καὶ καταλαλίας, θεοστυγίαν, ὑπερηφανίαν τε καὶ ἀλαζονείαν, κενοδοξίαν τε καὶ ἀφιλοξενίαν. ταῦτα γὰρ οἱ πράσσοντες στυγητοὶ τῷ θεῷ ὑπάρχουσιν· οὐ μόνον δὲ οἱ πράσσοντες αὐτά, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ συνευδοκοῦντες αὐτοῖς.	πεπληρωμένους πάσῃ ἀδικίᾳ, πονηρίᾳ, πλεονεξίᾳ, κακίᾳ, μεστοὺς φθόνου, φόνου, ἔριδος, δόλου, κακοηθείας, ψιθυριστάς, καταλάλους, θεοστυγεῖς, ὑβριστάς, ὑπερηφάνους, ἀλαζόνας, ἐφευρετὰς κακῶν, γονεῦσιν ἀπειθεῖς, ἀσυνέτους, ἀσυνθέτους, ἀστόργους, ἀνελεημόνας, οἵτινες τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγνόντες, ὅτι τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες ἄξιοι θανάτου εἰσίν, οὐ μόνον αὐτὰ ποιοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ συνευδοκοῦσι τοῖς πράσσουσι.

The dependence of Clement's *Epistle* on that of Paul's Letter to the Romans is equally visible if the English renderings of them be compared, as follows:—

[Translation.]

Clement xxxv, 5, 6.

Casting away from ourselves all unrighteousness and lawlessness, covetousness, strife, malignity, and deceit; whisperings and backbitings, hatred of God, haughtiness and boastfulness, vainglory and inhospitableness.

For they that practise these things are hateful to God. And not only they which practise them, but also they who consent with them.

Romans i, 29–32.

Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they which practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.

Some of the sources of Paul approximate in text still more to Clement—*e.g.*, the reading *πονηρίᾳ* "wickedness" is not certain. In some, "malignity" precedes "deceit." In some, "and" is added before the words "not only."

In the above parallel passages the agreement both in kind and sequence of the lists of vices is too close to be accidental; and this is clinched by the identity of sense and form of the clauses which follow the two lists. Nor is this the only example of the influence of the Paulines on Clement. We give one more, giving the English only:—

Paul (1 Cor. i, 11–13).

For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

Clement xlvii, 1.

Take ye up the epistle of the blessed Paul, the Apostle, what did he write first to you in the beginning of the good tidings. In verity he spiritually indited you a letter about himself and Cephas and Apollos.

Here Clement only alludes to Paul's letter, not citing it, and he betrays a knowledge of the order and times in which Paul wrote his Epistles; for he declares that 1 Corinthians was written by Paul in the beginning of the good tidings—*i.e.*, of his preaching to them of the Gospel. The Corinthians had been first evangelized by him three years before. The same phrase meets us in the same sense in Paul (Philippians iv, 15) :—

> And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that *in the beginning of the Gospel*, when I departed from Macedonia, etc.

Altogether there are thirty passages in Clement's *Epistle to the Corinthians* which indicate more or less clearly a knowledge of the Pauline Epistles, including that to Hebrews. If we were tracing the relation of two profane authors, no scholar would hesitate to acknowledge a direct influence of one on the other. Merely because one of them happens to belong to the New Testament, such writers as Van Manen, W. B. Smith, *et hoc genus omne*, feel themselves in duty bound to run their heads against a brick wall. The responsibility, it must be admitted, lies at the door of orthodox theologians. For centuries independent scholars have been warned off the domain of so-called sacred literature. The Bible might not be treated as any other book. I once heard the late Canon Liddon forecast the most awful fate for Oxford if it ever should be. The nemesis of orthodox superstition is that such writers as those we are criticizing cannot bring themselves to treat the book fairly, as they would other literature; nor is any hypothesis too crazy for them when they approach Church history. The laity, in turn, who too often do not know their right hand

from their left, are so justly suspicious of the evasions and *arrière-pensée* of orthodox apologists that they are ready to accept any wild and unscholarly theory that labels itself Rationalist.

Presuppositions of the argument from silence

The Epistles of Paul, then, must obviously have been widely known before Marcion issued an expurgated edition of them in the year 140. We have shown that many of them were familiar to Clement of Rome in the last decade of the first century. But even if we had no traces of the Pauline Epistles before the year 140, as Van Manen and these writers in the teeth of the evidence maintain, it would not follow that they were as late as the first irrefragable use of them by a later author. Professor W. B. Smith's argument is based on the supposed silence of earlier authors, and he entitles his chapter on this subject "*Silentium Saeculi.*" A magnificent *petitio principii!* He has never thought over the aptitudes of the "argument from silence." This argument, as MM. Langlois and Seignobos remark in their *Introduction to the Study of History* (translation by Berry; London, Duckworth, 1898),

> is based on the absence of indications with regard to a fact. From the circumstance of the fact [*e.g.*, of Paul's writing certain epistles] not being mentioned in any document it is inferred that there was no such fact.....It rests on a feeling which in ordinary life is expressed by saying: "If it were true, we should have heard of it."".....In order that such reasoning should be justified it would be necessary that every fact should have been observed and recorded in writing, and that all the records should have been preserved. Now the greater part of the documents which have been written have been lost, and the greater part of the events which happen are not recorded in writing. In the majority of cases the

> argument would be invalid. It must, therefore, be restricted to the cases where the conditions implied in it have been fulfilled. It is necessary not only that there should be now no documents in existence which mention the fact in question, but that there should never have been any.

Now it is notorious that in the case of the earliest Christian literature there was a special cause at work of a kind to lead to its disappearance; this was the perpetual alteration of standards of belief, and the anxiety of rival schools of thought to destroy one another's books. The philosophic authors above cited further point out that "every manuscript is at the mercy of the least accident; its preservation or destruction is a matter of pure chance." In the case of Christian books malice prepense and *odium theologicum* were added to accident and mere chance.

How, then, can Mr. W. B. Smith be sure that there were not fifty writings before the year 140 which by citation or otherwise attested the earlier existence of all or some of the Pauline Epistles? We have the merest debris of the earliest Christian literature. What right has he to argue as if he had the whole of it in the hollow of his hand? In such a context the argument from silence is absolute rubbish, and he ought to know it. But, alas, the orthodox apologist has trained him in this sphere to be content with "demonstrations" which in any other would be at once extinguished by ridicule.

Date of Paulines to be determined by contents

Obviously the genuineness and date of the Pauline Epistles can only be determined by their contents, and not by a supposed deficiency of allusions to them in a literature that is well-nigh completely lost to us. Judged by these considerations, and by the hundreds of undesigned coincidences with the Book of Acts, we

must conclude in regard to most of them that they are from the hand of the Paul who is so familiar a figure in that book. The author of the Paulines has just the same supreme and exclusive interest in the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah as the Paul of Acts; he manifests everywhere the same aloofness from the earthly life and teaching of Jesus. They yield the same story as does Acts of his birth and upbringing, of his persecution of the Messianist followers of Jesus and of his conversion; much the same record of his missionary travels can be reconstructed from the Letters as we have in Acts. Yet there is no sign of borrowing on either side. By way of casting doubt on the Pauline Letters the deniers of the historicity insist on the fact that in Acts there is no hint of Paul ever having written Epistles to the Churches he created or visited. Why should there be? To a companion Paul must have been much more than a mere writer of letters. To Luke the letter writing must have seemed the least important part of Paul's activity, although for us the accident of their survival makes the Epistles seem of prime importance. In the Epistles, on the other hand, it is objected that there is no indication of any use of Acts. How could there be, seeing that the book was not penned (except on Van Manen's hypothesis) until long after the Epistles had been written and sent? I admit that Paul's account in Galatians of his personal history is difficult to reconcile with Acts, and has provided a regular crux for critics of every school.[1] The numerous coincidences,

Undesigned agreement between Acts and Paulines

[1] The difficulties largely vanish on the assumption that Galatians is the earliest of the Epistles, and that in Gal. ii, 1, *dia d* "after four" was misread in an early copy as *dia id* "after fourteen." This is

however, of the two writings are all the more worthy of attention. If we found them agreeing pat with each other we should reasonably suspect some form of common authorship, if not of collusion. As it is they attest one another very much in the way in which the letters of Cicero attest and are attested by Sallust, Julius Cæsar, and other contemporary or later writers of Roman history. There is neither that complete accord nor complete discord between Acts and Paulines, which would lead a competent historian to distrust either as fairly contemporary and trustworthy witnesses to the same epoch and province of history.

Paul witnesses a real Jesus

The testimony of Paul to a real and historical Jesus is to be gathered from those passages in which he directly refers to him or in which he refers to his brethren and disciples, for obviously a solar myth cannot have had brethren nor have personally commissioned disciples and apostles. I have pointed out in the first chapter of *Myth, Magic, and Morals* that the interest of Paul in the historical Jesus was slender, and have explained why it was so. But that is no excuse for ignoring it, or pretending it is not there.

Summary of Pauline evidence

What does it amount to? This, that Jesus the Messiah "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. i, 2); that "he was born of a woman, born under the law"—that is to say, he was born like any other man, and not, as a later generation believed, of a virgin mother. It means also that he was born into Jewish circles, and that he was brought up as a Jew, obedient to the Mosaic law

Professor Lake's conjecture. Such misreadings of the Greek numerals are common in ancient MSS.

(Gal. iv, 4). His gospel was intended "for the Jews in the first instance, but also for the Greeks" (Rom. i, 16, ii, 11). He was "made a minister of the circumcision" (Rom. xv, 8); in other words, he had no quarrel with circumcision, even if he did not go out of his way to insist on it as part of the Law which, in the first Gospel it is recorded, he came not to destroy but to fulfil.

Evidence of Epistles to Timothy

According to Tim. ii, 8, Jesus was "of the seed of David according to my gospel." This implies that others than Paul did not admit the Davidic ancestry of Jesus, and it is implicitly rejected by Jesus himself in Mark xii, 35, as I point out in *Myth, Magic, and Morals*, ch. xii. That is good proof that the Epistle preserves a tradition that was quite independent on the later Gospels; and that proves that even if the Epistles to Timothy be not Paul's, they are anyhow very early documents, and constitute another witness to the historicity of Jesus. In the first of them, ch. vi, 13, we learn that Christ Jesus witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate.

Pauline evidence as to death of Jesus,

The passages in which Paul insists that Jesus was crucified, died, and rose again are so numerous that they almost defy collection. In 1 Cor. xv, 3, Paul relates the story of the resurrection at length. He says he had "received" it from those who believed before himself. From them he had learned that Christ had "died for our sins," had been "buried," and "raised on the third day," after which he appeared first "to Cephas" or Peter, next "to the Twelve"—*i.e.*, the Twelve Apostles of whom we read in the Gospels that Jesus chose them and sent them forth to herald to the Jews the speedy approach of the Kingdom of God. Next "he appeared to 500 brethren

at once" of whom most were still alive when Paul wrote; then "to James," then "to all the apostles," and "last of all" to Paul himself.

and as to his Hebrew disciples

On the strength of this last vision of the Lord, Paul claimed to be as good an apostle as any of those who were apostles before him (Gal. i, 17). Accordingly, in 1 Cor. ix, 1, he writes in answer to those who poohpoohed his mission: "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" And again, 2 Cor. xi, 22, in the same vein: "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as one beside myself. I am more; in labours more abundantly, in prisons," etc.

So 2 Cor. xii, 11: "In nothing came I behind the very chiefest apostles."

From such passages we can realize what a purely Hebrew business the Church was to begin with. To be an apostle you had to be at least a Hebrew, and it is clear that the earlier apostles challenged the right of Paul to call himself an apostle on the ground that he had not, as they, been a personal follower of Jesus. Their challenge led him to preface his Epistles with an assertion of his apostleship: "Paul, an apostle of Messiah Jesus."

We learn further (1 Cor. xi, 23 foll.) how on a certain night "the Lord Jesus was betrayed" or handed over to his enemies (N.B.—The occasion is referred to as one well known); how he then took bread, and when he had given thanks, brake it, etc. All this ill agrees with the view that Paul believed the Jesus of the Gospels to be an ancient Palestinian Sun-God-Saviour Joshua. We read also (1 Cor. ix, 5) that "the brethren of the Lord," like "the rest of

the apostles and Cephas," led about wives (probably spiritual ones), and Paul claims the same right for himself. In Galatians, ch. ii, he recounts how he went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days, on which occasion he associated with James, the brother of the solar myth. On another occasion this brother of the Sun-god sent emissaries to Antioch to warn Peter or Cephas against eating with Gentiles, as Paul had taught him to do. Peter had been "intrusted with the gospel of the circumcision," as Paul with that of the uncircumcision. On this occasion there was a stand-up quarrel between Paul and the older apostle of the sun-myth, and Paul's Epistles ring from beginning to end with echoes of his quarrel over circumcision with the sun-myth's earlier followers.

How do Mr. Robertson and his friends get round all this evidence? Their way out of it is beautifully simple. It consists in ruling out every passage as an interpolation that stands in their way. So I have seen an ill-tempered chess-player, when he lost his queen, kick over the chess-table and begin to swear. That is one device. The other is to pretend that the apostles with whom Paul was in personal touch were not apostles of the solar god, but of the Jewish high priest, who was also president of that secret society in whose bosom were acted the ritual and dramas or mystery-plays[1] of annually slain Joshuas, of vegetation-gods, of Osiris, Krishna, and the whole pack of mythical beings out of whom the Jewish Messiah Jesus was compacted.

The "myth" of the Twelve

Let us take first the "myth," as Mr. Robertson styles it, of the Twelve Apostles. Needless to say, Mr.

[1] *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 354.

Robertson and his friends regard the Gospel story of their choice and mission as a fable. But they have the bad grace to turn up afresh in Paul's Epistles. Away with them, therefore, exclaims Mr. Robertson; and his friends echo his cry.

"In the documents from which all scientific study of Christian origins must proceed—the Epistles of Paul—there is no evidence of such a body" (*Christianity and Mythology*, p. 341).

In the passage in which the Twelve are mentioned (1 Cor. xv, 3 foll.) we are further instructed "there is one interpolation on another." It does not in the least matter that the passage stands in every manuscript, and in every ancient version and commentator. It offends Mr. Robertson and his friends; so we must cut it out. *Bos locutus est;* and he complacently sums up his argument (p. 342) in the words: "Paul, then, knew nothing of a 'twelve.'"

Difficulties about Judas

And yet he notes (p. 354) that in the fragments of the Peter Gospel recently recovered from the sands of Egypt, Jesus is still credited with twelve disciples immediately after the crucifixion, and it is therein related that they "wept and grieved" at the loss of their master. No hint, Mr. Robertson justly remarks, is here given of the defection of Judas from the group. No more is any hint given of it in Paul's Epistle. These two sources, therefore, support each other in a most unexpected manner in ignoring the Judas story. At the same time *twelve* disciples or apostles (in the context they are the same thing) are incredible as an interpolation; for an interpolator would have adjusted his interpolation to the early diffused story of Judas's treason, and have written not "the Twelve," but "the Eleven."

Mr. Robertson admits that "at the stage of the composition of this (the Peter) Gospel, the Judas myth was not current," and that therefore the "Judas myth" is later than that of the Twelve. It must, by parity of reasoning, be later than the text of Paul, which, therefore, if interpolated, must have been interpolated before the legend, if such it be, of Judas the traitor got abroad. Now we already meet with this legend in Mark, and it is taken over from him by the other evangelists, Matthew embellishing it with the tale of Judas hanging himself, and Luke in Acts with that of his bursting asunder. Papias, before A.D. 140, knew of further details of Judas's story of a most *macabre* kind; the story stood also in the lost form of gospel used by Celsus, about 160–180, against whom Origen wrote. The tale of Judas, then, was of wide and early diffusion; yet Mr. Robertson, as we have seen, admits that at the time when the Peter Gospel emerged the Judas myth was not yet abroad. Neither, then, can it have been current at the stage of the interpolating of Paul's Epistle, and this interpolation, therefore, is prior to all the Gospels, to Acts, and to the sources used by Papias and by the authors of the Peter Gospel and of Celsus's Gospel. Nevertheless, on p. 357, Mr. Robertson, as a last method of avoiding Paul's testimony on another point, is inclined to "decide with Van Manen that all the Pauline Epistles are pseudepigraphic," and merely express the views of "second-century Christian champions." He therefore commits himself to the supposition that Epistles forged not earlier than A.D. 130, were yet interpolated in the interests of a tradition in which "the Twelve are treated as holding together after the resurrection (p. 354)," which tradition, however, must

have long before that date been abrogated by the growing popularity of the Judas myth. Could texts be treated with greater levity? I may also note that the inconsistency of Paul's statement that Jesus "was seen" by the Twelve with the Judas story was so patent to scribes of the third and fourth centuries that they had already begun to alter it in the Greek texts and versions to the statement that "he was seen by the Eleven." Now is it likely that Paul's text at any time would have been interpolated in such a way as to make it contradict so early and popular a Christian belief as that in the treason and hurried suicide of Judas? The hypothesis is absurd, and not the less absurd because it is framed merely to save the other hypothesis that the twelve apostles of the Gospels were for the authors of the Gospels and for their readers an allegory of the twelve signs of the Zodiac revolving round the solar myth Joshua. Such are the lengths to which the exigencies of his "mythic" system drive Mr. Robertson.

Paul testifies that the older apostles conversed with Jesus

Some texts which imply that Paul, if he did not actually see Jesus walking about on this earth, yet imply that he might have done so, he seems to despair of, and passes them over in silence. Such is the text, 2 Cor. v, 16: "Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: *even though we have known Christ* after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more."

The older apostles, as is implied in verse 12 of the same chapter, prided themselves on their personal intercourse with Jesus, and twitted Paul with never having enjoyed it. Paul's answer is that *henceforth—i.e.*, now that he is converted—he has no interest in any man, not even in Jesus, as a being of flesh and

blood, but only as a vessel filled with the spirit of election, and so a new creature in Christ, the first member of the heavenly kingdom on earth. He seems to aver that he had actually seen his Redeemer in the flesh, but before he was converted. But such knowledge with him counts nothing in his own favour; nor will he allow it to count in favour of the older apostles. Their association with Jesus in the flesh failed to render them apostles in any other sense than his vision of the risen Jesus rendered him one also.

But there are other texts in Paul most inconvenient to the zodiacal theory of the apostles. Such are the texts I have cited from Galatians. How does Mr. Robertson get rid of their evidence?

Epistle to Galatians attests reality of Peter, John, and James

He begins (p. 342) with the usual *caveat* that the Epistle to the Galatians is probably not genuine, and, even if it be, is nevertheless "frequently interpolated." And yet any reader, with eyes in his head and an intelligence behind them, must recognize in this Epistle a writing which, above all other ancient writings, rings true, and is instinct with the personality of a missionary, who in it bares his inmost heart to his converts. Against this impression, which it must leave upon anyone but a pedant, and against the fact that in the external tradition there is nothing to suggest either that it is not genuine or that it is a mass of interpolations, what has Mr. Robertson to offer us in support of his thesis? Nothing, except his *ipse dixit.* We are to accept on a purely philological question the verdict of one whose mythological equations are on a par with those of the editors of the *Banner of Israel.* However, he does condescend to explain away the apostles with whom, at Jerusalem,

Paul held personal converse; and, taking from Professor W. B. Smith a cue, which is also caught at by Professor Drews, he assures us that the Peter (*or* Cephas), James, and John, whom Paul knew personally, were not men who had been "in direct intercourse with Jesus," but were merely "leaders of an existing sect"—*i.e.*, of the secret sect of Jews who, after celebrating endless ritual dramas of annually slain Joshuas and vegetation-gods, had, by dint of prolonged archæological study of pagan mythology, art, and statuary, elaborated the four Gospels, adopted the Old Testament as their holy scripture, and Messianic Judaism as their distinctive creed; for such in essence the Christianity of the last half of the first century was, as even Mr. Robertson will hardly deny.

But Paul (Gal. i, 18, 19) expressly ranks Peter, or Cephas, together with James, among the apostles, using that word in a wide sense of persons commissioned by Jesus; and he describes James and Cephas and John (ii, 9) as men "who were reputed to be pillars," or leading men of the Church. He declares that in the end they made friends with him, and arranged that he should preach the Kingdom to the uncircumcised Gentiles as they were doing to the circumcised Jews.

The "Twelve" were apostles of the Jewish High Priest!

Now who had commissioned these three apostles, if not Jesus? Who had taught them about the Kingdom and sent them forth to proclaim it? Mr. Robertson, oddly enough, scents a difficulty in the idea of a Sun-God-Saviour Joshua, albeit son of Miriam a virgin, sending forth apostles; so he decides that "apostles" in Galatians means "the twelve apostles of the Patriarch, of whom he must have had knowledge"

(p. 342). Of what Patriarch? Why, of course, "of the Patriarch or High Priest," whose "twelve apostles" formed "an institution which preceded and survived the beginning of the Christian era" (p. 344). And, to use Mr. Robertson's own phrase in such connections, "the plot thickens" when we find (*ibid.*) that

> the twelve Jewish Apostles aforesaid, who were commissioned by the High Priest—and later by the Patriarch at Tiberias—to collect tribute from the scattered faithful,

were no others than the Twelve Apostles who wrote the "teaching of the Twelve Apostles," recovered in 1873 by Bryennios! These "Judaizing apostles preached circumcision,"[1] and "were among the leaders of the Jesuist community in its pre-Pauline days."

And they wrote the *Didaché!*

This discovery of Mr. Robertson's is of stupendous interest. It amounts to nothing less than this: that the pre-Pauline secret sect of "Jesuists" which kept up in Jerusalem the cult of the Sun-God-Saviour Joshua, with his late Persian appendage of a virgin mother Miriam; and, not content with doing that, padded it out with ritual dramas of vegetation-gods, cults of Osiris, of Dionysus, Proteus, Hermes, Janus, and fifty other gods and heroes (whose legends Mr. Robertson has studied in Smith's *Dictionary of Mythology*)—this sect, I say, had for its president the Jewish High Priest, and for its "pillars" the apostles, or messengers, whom the said High Priest was in the habit of sending out to the Jews of the Dispersion for the collection of the Temple tribute!

[1] Why did they not do so in their "teaching," if it was intended (see p. 344) for the Jews of the Dispersion, instead of confining themselves to precepts "simply ethical, non-priestly, and non-Rabbinical"?

This High Priest, we further learn on p. 342, was the "*man*" who sent out the apostles in the first verse of Galatians, from which apostles Paul expressly dissociates himself when he writes: "Paul, an apostle, not from men, neither through a man, but through Jesus Christ." Here we are to understand that Paul is pitting his Sun-God-Saviour Joshua against the Jewish High Priest. The Sun-god has sent him forth, though not the other apostles. That must be Mr. Robertson's interpretation, and we must give up the older and more obvious one which saw in the words "not from men, neither through man," no reference to a Jewish high priest or priests, but a mere enhancement of the claim, ever reiterated by Paul, that he owed his apostleship direct to the risen Jesus Christ and God the Father; so that he held a divine and spiritual, not an earthly and carnal, commission.

My readers must by now feel very much like poor little Alice when the Black Queen was dragging her across Wonderland. If they find the sensation delightful, they can, I daresay, enjoy plenty more of it by a closer study of Mr. Robertson's books on the subject. If they do not like it, then they must not blame me for taking him seriously; for is he not acclaimed by Dr. Drews as our greatest exegete of the New Testament, Dr. Frazer alone excepted? Is he not the spiritual guide of learned German orientalists like Winckler and Jensen? Has not Professor W. B. Smith assured us of how much he feels he can learn from such a scholar and thinker, though "he has preferred not to poach on his preserves."[1] It is,

[1] *Ecce Deus*, p. 8.

therefore, incumbent on me to probe his work a little further. Let us return to the passage, 1 Cor. xv, 5, where we are told that Jesus appeared first to Cephas. We have already seen that the Peter of the Gospels is in this new system alternately a sign of the Zodiac, a Mithraic myth, an alias of Janus, of Proteus, a member of any other Pantheon you like. Obviously he has nothing to do with Paul's acquaintance. The latter in turn is "not one of the pupils and companions of the crucified Jesus" (p. 348). How, indeed, could he be, seeing that Jesus is a Sun-god crucified upon the Milky Way? No, he is something much humbler—to wit, "simply one of the apostles of a Judaic cult that preaches circumcision," and, more definitely, as we have seen, one of the twelve apostles of the Jewish High Priest. James and John must equally have belonged to this interesting band of apostles.

Jesus of Nazareth was Jesus Ben Pandira,

This being so, it is pertinent to ask why Paul so persistently indicates that these apostles and pillars of the Church had seen Jesus and conversed with him in the flesh. To this question Mr. Robertson attempts no answer. For he believes that the crucified Jesus, to whom Paul refers on every page of his Epistles, was not the Jesus of Christian tradition, but "Jesus Ben Pandira, dead long before, and represented by no preserved biography or teachings whatever" (p. 378). This Jesus had "really been only hanged on a tree" (*ibid.*); but "the factors of a crucifixion myth," among which we must not forget its "phallic significance," for that "should connect with all its other aspects" (p. 375),—these factors, says Mr. Robertson, "were conceivably strong enough to turn the hanging into a crucifixion."

who had died one hundred years before

It follows that Paul was quite mistaken in indicating the apostles whom he conversed with at Jerusalem to be apostles of the crucified one; in order to be so, they must all have been over-ripe centenarians, since Pandira had died at least a hundred years before. It matters nothing that on the next page (379) Mr. Robertson entertains doubts as to whether this worthy ever lived at all. Who else, he asks (p. 364), could "the Pauline Jesus, who has taught nothing and done nothing," be, save "a doctrinal evolution from the Jesus of a hundred years before?" We must, he adds with delightful *ignoratio elenchi*, "perforce assume such a long evolution." Otherwise it would not be "intelligible that, even if he had been only hanged after stoning, he should by that time have come to figure mythically as crucified." He admits that Paul's "references to a crucified Jesus are constant, and offer no sign of interpolation." And he is quite ready to admit also that, "if the Jesus of Paul were really a personage put to death under Pontius Pilate, the Epistles (of Paul) would give us the strongest ground for accepting an actual crucifixion." But, alas, the Jesus put to death under Pontius Pilate, the Javelin-man, is no more than an allegory of Joshua the ancient Palestinian Sun-god, rolled up with a vegetation-god and other mythical beings, and slain afresh once a year. There is thus no alternative left but to identify Paul's crucified Jesus with Jesus Ben Pandira; and Mr. Robertson, with a sigh of relief, embraces the alternative, for he feels that Paul's evidence is menacing his whole structure.

It was nasty of Paul not to indicate more clearly to us that by his crucified Jesus he intended Jesus Ben Pandira; and, in view of the circumstance that we

have left to us no "biography or teachings whatever" of this Jesus, Paul might surely have communicated to us some details of his career. It would have saved Mr. Robertson the trouble of inventing them.

James, brother of Jesus, only in a Pickwickian sense

At first sight, too, it was extremely inconsiderate of Paul to "thicken the plot" by bringing on his stage a brother of Jesus Ben Pandira or of the solar myth Joshua. I am not sure which. But Mr. Robertson, like Alice, is out for strange adventures, and prepared to face any emergency. "Brother," therefore, is here to be taken in a Pickwickian sense only. And here we will let Dr. W. B. Smith take up the parable, for it is he who has, with the help of St. Jerome, found his friends a way out of their difficulty. Moreover, he is more in need of a way out than even Mr. Robertson; for he declines to admit behind Jesus of Nazareth even —what Mr. Robertson styles, p. 364—"a Talmudic trace of *a* Jesus (Ben Pandira), who was put to death on the eve of the Passover about a century before the time of Pontius Pilate." Professor Smith cannot hesitate, therefore, to be of opinion that, when Paul calls James a brother of the Lord, he does not "imply any family kinship," but one of a "class of earnest Messianists, zealots of obedience" to the Mosaic Law. He appeals in confirmation of his conjecture to the apostrophe of Jesus when his mother and brethren came to arrest him as an ecstatic (Mark iii, 31–35):—

> Who is my mother and my brethren?.....whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother.

He also appeals to 1 Cor. ix, 5, where Paul alludes to "the brethren of the Lord" as claiming a right to lead about a wife that is a sister. And he argues that those who in Corinth, to the imperilling of Christian

unity, said, some, "I am of Cephas"; others, "I am of Christ"; others, "I am of Apollos," were known as brethren of Christ, of Cephas, etc. Now it is true that Paul and other early Christian writers regarded the members of the Church as *brethren* or as *sisters*, just as the members of monastic society have ever styled themselves *brothers* and *sisters* of one another. But there is no example of a believer being called a brother *of the Lord* or *of Jesus*.[1] The passage in Mark and its parallels are, according to Professor Smith, purely legendary and allegorical, since he denies that Jesus ever lived; and he has no right, therefore, to appeal to them in order to decide what Paul intended by the phrase when he used it, as before, not of a mythical, but of a concrete, case. However, if Professor Smith is intent on appealing to the Gospels, then he must allow equal weight to such a text as Matthew xiii, 55: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?"

Did all these people, we may ask, including his mother, stand in a merely spiritual relationship to Jesus? Impossible. If they were not flesh and blood relations, then the passage is meaningless even as allegorical romance. Again, in the very passage to which Professor Smith appeals (Mark iii, 31–35), we read that his *mother and brethren* came and stood without, and it was their interference with him that provoked the famous apostrophe. Were they, too, only spiritually related to him? Were they, too,

[1] Note in Matthew the phrase (xxiii, 8): "But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren."

"earnest Messianists, zealots of obedience"? In John's Gospel we hear afresh that his brethren believed not in him. Were they, too, mere "earnest Messianists, zealots of obedience"? When Josephus, again, twice alludes to "James the Just who was brother of Jesus," is he, an enemy of the Christian faith, adopting Christian slang? Does he, too, mean merely to "denote religious relation without the remotest hint of blood kinship"? In 1 Cor. ix, 5, the most natural interpretation is that the brothers of the Lord are his real brothers, whose names are supplied in the Gospels.

Both in Paul and in the Gospels the "myth" has parents and brothers and sisters

Here, then, are four wholly independent groups of ancient documents, of which one gives us the names of four of the brothers of Jesus, clearly indicating that they were real brothers, and sons of Mary and the Carpenter; while the other group (the Paulines) speak as ever of his "brothers," but give us the name of one only, James; the third—viz., the works of Josephus—allude to one only—viz., James, but without indicating that there were not several. Lastly, the *we* document (Acts xxi, 18) testifies that "Paul went in with us unto James." Is not this enough? Surely, if we were here treating of profane history, no sane student would for a moment hesitate to accept such data, furnished by wholly independent and coincident documents, as historical. Professor Smith's other guess, that in 1 Cor. ix, 5, *brethren* means *spiritual brethren*, just begs the question, and, like his spiritual interpretation of James's relationship, offends Greek idiom, as I said above. Paul, like the author of Acts xxi, 17, speaks of "the brother" or of "the brethren"—*e.g.*, in 1 Cor. viii, 11: "*the brother* for whose sake Christ died"; but when

the person whose brother it is is named, a blood relationship is always conveyed in the Paulines as in the rest of the New Testament. If "brethren of the Lord" in 1 Cor. ix, 5, does not mean real brethren, why are they distinguished from all the apostles, who on Professor Smith's assumption, above all others, merited to be called "brethren of the Lord"? The appeal, moreover, to 1 Cor. i, 12 foll., is absurd; for Paul is alluding there to factions among the believers of Corinth; how is it possible to interpret these factions as brotherhoods? There was only one brotherhood of the faithful, according to Paul's ideal; and the relationship involved in such phrases as "I of Cephas," "I of Paul," is that of a convert to his teacher and evangelist, not that of spiritual brethren to each other. As used by his Corinthian converts, such phrases were a direct menace to spiritual brotherhood and unity, and not an expression of it; and that is why Paul wished to hear no more of them. When he makes appeal to them Professor Smith damages rather than benefits his argument.

Jerome's opinion about Jesus's brothers

There remains the appeal to Jerome (*Ecce Deus*, p. 237):—

> No less an authority than Jerome has expressed the correct idea on this point. In commenting on Gal. i, 19, he says (in sum): "James was called the Lord's brother on account of his high character, his incomparable faith, and his extraordinary wisdom; the other apostles are also called brothers" (John xx, 17).

Here Professor Smith withholds from his readers the fact that Jerome regarded James the brother of Jesus as his first cousin. It is just as difficult for a mythical personage to have a first cousin as to have a brother. Moreover, the reasons which actuated

Jerome to deny that Jesus had real brethren was—as the *Encyclopædia Biblica* (art. James) points out—"a prepossession in favour of the perpetual virginity of Mary the mother of Jesus." It is, indeed, a hollow theory that, in order to its justification, must take refuge in the Encratite rubbish of Jerome.

Mutual independence of Pauline and Gospel stories of the risen Christ

If the crucified Jesus of Paul was Jesus Ben Pandira, stoned to death and hanged on a tree between the years B.C. 106–79, then how can Paul have written (1 Cor. xv, 6) that the greater part of the 500 brethren to whom Jesus appeared were still alive? I neither assert nor deny the possibility of so many at once having fallen under the spell of a common illusion, though I believe the annals of religious ecstasy might afford parallels. But this I do maintain, that the passage records a conviction in Paul's mind that Jesus, after his death by crucifixion, had appeared to many at once, and that not a hundred years before, but at a comparatively recent time. That is also Mr. Robertson's view; for, rather than face the passage, he whips out his knife and cuts it out of the text. Yet there is not a single reason for doing so, except that it upsets his hypothesis; for the circumstance that the incident cannot be reconciled with the Gospel stories of the apparitions of the risen Christ clearly shows that Paul's text is independent on them. Mr. Robertson argues that, if it were not a late interpolation, the evangelists would have found it in Paul and incorporated it in their Gospels. I ask in turn, Why did the interpolator thrust into the Pauline letter not only this passage, but at least two other incidents (the apparitions to Peter and James) which figure in no canonical Gospel? Why, if the Evangelists were bound to

consult the Paulines in giving an account of these posthumous appearances, was not the hypothetical interpolator of the Paulines equally bound to consult them? The most natural hypothesis is that the Gospels on one side and the Pauline Epistles on the other led independent lives, till their respective traditions were so firmly fixed that no one could tamper with either of them. The conflict, therefore, such as it is, between this Pauline passage and the Gospels is the strongest possible proof of its genuineness.

The Pauline account of the Eucharist

Mr. Robertson's treatment of the Pauline description of the origin of the Lord's Supper as described in 1 Cor. xi, 23–27, is another example of his determination simply to rule out all evidence which he cannot explain away. "*It is evident*," he writes (p. 347), that this whole passage, "or at least the first part of it, is an interpolation." We would expect him to produce support for this view from some MS. or ancient version for what is so *evident*. Not at all; for he takes no interest in, and has no turn for, the scientific criticism of texts *a posteriori*, but deals with them by *a priori* intuitions of his own. "The passage in question (verses 23, 24, 25) has every appearance of being an interpolation." He is the first to discover such an appearance. It is well known that the words "took bread" as far as "in my blood" recur in Luke xxii, 19, 20; and this is how Mr. Robertson deals with the problem of their recurrence: "No one pretends that the Third Gospel was in existence in Paul's time; and the only question is whether Luke copied the Epistle or a late copyist supplemented the Epistle from Luke."

Surely there is another alternative—viz., that a

copyist of Luke supplemented the Gospel from Paul. This is as conceivable as that a copyist of Paul supplemented the Epistle from Luke. It is also an hypothesis that has textual evidence in favour of it; for the Bezan Codex and several old Latin MSS., as well as the old Syriac version, omit the words, *which is given on your behalf*, as far as *on your behalf is shed* —that is to say, the end of verse 19 and the whole of verse 20. Here we have a palmary example of the mingled temerity and ignorance with which Mr. Robertson applies his principle of "vital interpolations" to remove anything from the New Testament texts which stands in the way of his far-fetched hypotheses and artificial combinations.

Jesus Ben Pandira in Talmud *is* Jesus of Nazareth

But it is time to inquire whence Mr. Robertson derived his certainty that Jesus Ben Pandira died in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, B.C. 106–79. Dr. Samuel Kraus, in his exhaustive study of Talmudic notices of Jesus of Nazareth (*Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen*, Berlin, 1902, p. 242) assumes as a fact beyond dispute that the Jeschu or Joshua Ben Pandira (or Ben Stada or Ben Satda) mentioned in the *Toldoth Jeschu* is Jesus of Nazareth. In the Toldoth he is set in the reign of Tiberius. This Toldoth is not earlier than A.D. 400, and took its information from the pseudo-Hegesippus. The Spanish historian Abraham b. Daûd (about A.D. 1100) already noticed that the Talmudic tradition alluded to by Mr. Robertson set the birth of Jesus of Nazareth a hundred years too early; but the same tradition corrects itself in that it assigns Salome Alexandra to Alexander Jannai as his wife, and then, confusing her with Queen Helena the proselyte, brings the incident down to the right date. "The truth is," says Dr.

Kraus (p. 183), "we have got to do here with a chronological error." Lightfoot, to whose *Horae Hebraicae* Mr. Robertson refers in his footnote (p. 363), also assumed that by Jesus Ben Pandira, or son of Panthera, the Talmudists intended Jesus of Nazareth. Celsus (about A.D. 170) attested a Jewish tradition that Jesus Christ was Mary's son by a Roman soldier named Panthera, and later on even Christian writers worked Panthera into Mary's pedigree. Such is the origin of the Talmudic tradition exploited by Mr. Robertson. It is almost worthless; but, so far as it goes, it overthrows Mr. Robertson's hypothesis.

The disputed Epistles of Paul so many fresh witnesses

The Epistles to Colossians, Thessalonians, and the so-called Pastorals, if they are not genuine works of Paul, form so many fresh witnesses against the hypothesis of Mr. Robertson and his friends. Such a verse as Col. ii, 14, where in highly metaphorical language Jesus is said to have nailed the bond of all our trespasses to the cross, is an unmistakable allusion to the historical crucifixion: as also is the phrase "blood of his cross" in the same epistle, i, 20. In 1 Thess. iv, 14, is attested the belief that Jesus died and rose again: and again in v, 10. I have already indicated the express reference to the crucifixion *under Pontius Pilate* in 1 Tim. v, 13, and the statement in 2 Tim. ii, 8, that Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, was of the seed of David. These epistles may not be from Paul's hand, but they are unmistakably early; and their forgers, if they be forged, undoubtedly held that Jesus had really lived. So also did the author, whoever he was, of Hebrews, who speaks, ch. ii, 9, of Jesus suffering death, in ii, 18, of his "having suffered, being tempted." In vii, 14, we read this: "For it is evident that our

Lord hath sprung out of Judah." If Jesus was only a myth, how could this writer have written, probably before A.D. 70, that he was of the tribe of Judah? In ch. xii, 2, we are told that Jesus "endured the cross." That this epistle was penned before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is made probable by the statement in ix, 8, that "the first tabernacle is yet standing." Indeed, most of the epistle is turned into nonsense by any other hypothesis.

Catholic Epistles

The first Epistle of Peter is very likely pseudepigraphic, but it cannot be later than the year 100. It testifies, iv, 1, that Christ "suffered in the flesh."

The Johannine Epistles are probably from the same hand as the Fourth Gospel, and belong to the period 90–110 A.D. Their author insists (1 John iv, 2), as against the Docetes, that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

The Epistle of Jude, about the same date, exhorts those to whom it was addressed to "remember the words which have been spoken before by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Book of Revelation

Lastly, the Revelation of John can be definitely dated about A.D. 93. It testifies to the existence of several churches in Asia Minor in that age, and, in spite of the fanciful and oriental character of its imagery, it is from beginning to end irreconcilable with the supposition that its author did not believe in a Jesus who had lived, died, and was coming again to establish the new Jerusalem on earth. In ch. xxii, 16, Jesus is made to testify that he is the root and offspring of David. That does not look as if its author regarded Jesus as a solar or any other sort of myth.

Chapter V

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Evidence of Josephus

It remains to examine how this school of writers handle the evidence with regard to the earliest church supplied by Jewish or Pagan writers. I have said enough incidentally of the evidence of the Talmud and Toldoth Jeschu, but there remains that of Josephus. In the work on the *Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. xviii, 5, 2 (116 foll.), there is an account of John the Baptist, and it is narrated that Herod, fearing an insurrection of John's followers, threw him in bonds into the castle of Machaerus, and there murdered him. Afterwards, when Herod's army was destroyed, the Jewish population attributed the disaster to the wrath of God, and saw in it a retribution for slaying so just a man.[1] On the whole, Josephus's account

[1] The passage in which Josephus mentions John the Baptist runs as follows: "To some of the Jews it seemed that Herod had had his army destroyed by God, and that it was a just retribution on him for his severity towards John called the Baptist. For it was indeed Herod who slew him, though a good man, and one who bade the Jews in the practise of virtue and in the use of justice one to another and of piety towards God to walk together in baptism. For this was the condition under which baptism would present itself to God as acceptable, if they availed themselves of it, not by way of winning pardon for certain sins, but after attaining personal holiness, on account of the soul having been cleansed beforehand by righteousness. Because men flocked to him, for they took the greatest pleasure in listening to his words, Herod took fright and apprehended that his vast influence over people would lead to some outbreak of rebellion. For it looked as if they would follow his advice in all they did, and he came to the conclusion that far the best course was, before any revolution was

accords with the picture we have of John in the Synoptic Gospels, except that in the Gospels the place and circumstances of his murder are differently given. This difference is good evidence that Josephus's account is independent of the Christian sources. Nevertheless, Dr. Drews airily pretends that there is a strong suspicion of its being a forgery by some Christian hand. As for John the Baptist as we meet him in the Gospels, he is, says Drews, no historical personage. One expects some reason to be given for this negative conclusion, but gets none whatever except a magnificent hint that "a complete understanding of the baptism in the Jordan can only be attained, if here, too, we take into consideration the translation of the baptism into astrological terms" (*Christ Myth*, p. 121).

The astral John Baptist

And he proceeds to dilate on the thesis that the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan was "the reflection upon earth of what originally took place among the stars." This discovery rests on an equation—prephilological, of course, like that of "Maria" with "Myrrha"—of the name "John" or "Jehohanan" with "Oannes" or "Ea," the Babylonian Water-god. However, this writer is here not a little incoherent, for only on the page before he has assured us, as of something unquestionable, that John was closely related to the Essenes, and baptized the penitents in the Jordan in the open air. Was Jordan, too, up in

started by him, to anticipate it by destroying him: otherwise the upheaval would come, and plunge him into trouble and remorse. So John fell a victim to Herod's suspicions, was bound and sent to the fortress of Machaerus, of which I have above spoken, and there murdered. But the Jews were convinced that the loss of his army was by way of retribution for the treatment of John, and that it was God who willed the undoing of Herod."

heaven? Were the Essenes there also? Mr. Robertson, of course, pursues the same simple method of disposing of adverse evidence, and asserts (p. 396) that Josephus's account of John "is plainly open to that suspicion of interpolation which, in the case of the allusion to Jesus in the same book (*Antiq.*, xviii, 3, 3), has become for most critics a certainty." He does not condescend to inform his readers that the latter passage[1] is absent from important MSS., was unknown to Origen, and is therefore rightly bracketed by editors; whereas the account of John is in all MSS., and was known to Origen. But as we have

[1] The suspect passage in which Josephus refers to Jesus runs thus, *Ant.* xviii, 3, 3: "*Now about this time came Jesus*, a wise man, if indeed one may call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive what is true with pleasure, and he attracted many Jews and many of the Greeks. *This was the 'Christ.' And when on the accusation of the principal men amongst us Pilate had condemned him to the cross, they did not desist who had formerly loved him*, for he appeared to them on the third day alive again; the divine Prophets having foretold both this and a myriad other wonderful things about him; *and even now the race of those called Christians after him has not died out.*"

I have italicized such clauses as have a chance to be authentic, and as may have led Origen to say of Josephus that he did not believe Jesus to be the Christ. For the clause "This was the Christ" must have run, "This was the so-called Christ." We have the same expression in Matt. i, 16, and in the passage, undoubtedly genuine, in which Josephus refers to James, *Ant.*, xx, 9, 1. Here Josephus relates that the Sadducee High-priest Ananus (son of Annas of the New Testament), in the interval of anarchy between the departure of one Roman Governor, Festus, and the arrival of another, Albinus, set up a court of his own, "and bringing before it the brother of Jesus who was called Christ—James was his name—and some others, he accused them of being breakers of the Law, and had them stoned."

In the *History of the Jewish War*, iv, 5, 2, Josephus records his belief that the Destruction of Jerusalem was a divine nemesis for the murder of this Ananus by the Idumeans.

There is not now, nor ever was, any passage in Josephus where the fall of Jerusalem was explained as an act of divine nemesis for the murder of James by Ananus. Origen, as Professor Burkitt has remarked, "had mixed up in his commonplace book the account of Ananus's murder of James and the remarks of Josephus on Ananus's own murder."

seen before, Mr. Robertson is one of those gifted people who can discern by peculiar intuitions of their own that everything is interpolated in an author which offends their prejudices. He has a lofty contempt for the careful sifting of the textual tradition, the examination of MSS. and ancient versions to which a scholar resorts, before he condemns a passage of an ancient author as an interpolation. Moreover, a scholar feels himself bound to show why a passage was interpolated, in whose interests. For, regarded as an interpolation, a passage is as much a problem to him as it was before. Its genesis has still to be explained. But Messrs. Robertson and Drews and Smith do not condescend to explain anything or give any reasons. A passage slays their theories; therefore it is a "vital interpolation." It is the work of an ancient enemy sowing tares amid their wheat.

Josephus's reference to James, brother of Jesus

John the Baptist having been removed in this cavalier fashion from the pages of Josephus, we can hardly expect James the brother of Jesus to be left, and he is accordingly kicked out without ceremony. It does not matter a scrap that the passage (*Antiquities* xx, 9, 1, 200) stands in the Greek MSS. and in the Latin Version. As Professor W. B. Smith's argument on the point is representative of this class of critics, we must let him speak first (p. 235):—

> Origen *thrice* quotes as from Josephus the statement that the Jewish sufferings at the hands of Titus were a divine retribution for the slaying of James.

He then proceeds to quote the text of Origen, *Against Celsus*, i, 47, giving the reference, but mangling in the most extraordinary manner a text that is clear and consecutive. For Origen begins

(ch. xlvii) by saying that Celsus "somehow accepted John as a Baptist who baptized Jesus," and then adds the following:—

> In the Eighteenth Book of his *Antiquities of the Jews* Josephus bears witness to John as having been a Baptist, and as promising purification to those who underwent the rite. Now this writer, although not believing in Jesus as the Christ, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says, nevertheless—although against his will, not far from the truth—that these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus called Christ, the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his righteousness (*i.e.*, strict observance of the law).

In a later passage of the same treatise (ii, 13), which Mr. Smith cites correctly, Origen refers again to the same passage of the *Antiquities* (xx, 200) thus: "Titus demolished Jerusalem, as Josephus writes, on account of James the Just, the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ." Also in Origen's commentary on Matthew xiii, 55, we have a like statement that the sufferings of the Jews were a punishment for the murder of James the Just.

Origen therefore cites Josephus thrice about James, and in each case he has in mind the same passage—viz., xx, 200. But Mr. Smith, after citing the shorter passage, *Contra Celsum*, ii, 13, goes on as follows:—

> The passage is still found in some Josephus manuscripts; but, as it is wanting in others, it is, and must be, regarded as a Christian interpolation older than Origen.

Will Mr. Smith kindly tell us which are the MSS. in which are found any passage or passages referring the fall of Jerusalem to the death of James, and so far contradicting Josephus's interpretation of Ananus's death in the *History of the Jewish War*, iv, 5, 2. Niese, the latest editor, knows of none, nor did any previous editor know of any.

Mr. Smith then proceeds thus:—

> Now, since this phrase is certainly interpolated in the one place, the only reasonable conclusion is that it is interpolated in the other.

But "this phrase" never stood in Josephus at all, even as an interpolation, and on examination it turns out that Professor Smith's prejudice against the passage in which Josephus mentions James, is merely based on the muddle committed by Origen. Such are the arguments by which he seeks to prove that Josephus's text was interpolated by a Christian, as if a Christian interpolator, supposing there had been one (and he has left no trace of himself), would not, as the protest of Origen sufficiently indicates, have represented the fall of Jerusalem as a divine punishment, not for the slaying of James, but for the slaying of Jesus. Having demolished the evidence of Josephus in such a manner, Mr. Smith heads ten of his pages with the words, "*The Silence of Josephus*," as if he had settled all doubts for ever by mere force of his erroneous *ipse dixit*.

The testimony of Tacitus

The next section of Professor Smith's work (*Ecce Deus*) is headed with the same effrontery of calm assertion: "*The Silence of Tacitus*." This historian relates (*Annals*, xv, 44) that Nero accused the Christians of having burned down Rome. Nero

> subjected to most exquisite tortures those whom, hated for their crimes, the populace called Chrestians. The author of this name, Christus, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the Procurator Pontius Pilate; and, though repressed for the moment, the pernicious superstition was breaking forth again, not only throughout Judæa, the fountain-head of this mischief, but also throughout the capital, where all things from anywhere that are horrible or disgraceful pour in together and are made a religion of.

In the sequel Tacitus describes how an immense multitude, less for the crime of incendiarism than in punishment of their hatred of humanity, were convicted; how some were clothed in skins of wild beasts and thrown to dogs, while others were crucified or burned alive. Nero's savagery was such that it awoke the pity even of a Roman crowd for his victims.

Such a passage as the above, written by Tacitus soon after A.D. 100, is somewhat disconcerting to our authors. Professor Smith, proceeding on his usual innocent assumption that the whole of the ancient literature, Christian and profane, of this epoch lies before him, instead of a scanty débris of it, votes it to be a forgery. Why? Because Melito, Bishop of Sardis about 170 A.D., is the first writer who alludes to it in a fragment of an apology addressed to a Roman Emperor. As if there were not five hundred striking episodes narrated by Tacitus, yet never mentioned by any subsequent writer at all. Would Mr. Smith on that account dispute their authenticity? It is only because this episode concerns Christianity and gets in the way of his theories, that he finds it necessary to cut it out of the text. You can prove anything if you cook your evidence, and the wanton

mutilation of texts which no critical historian has ever called in question is a flagrant form of such cookery. In the hands of these writers facts are made to fit theory, not theory to fit facts.

Testimony of Clement agrees with Tacitus

I hardly need add that the narrative of Tacitus is frank, straightforward, and in keeping with all we know or can infer in regard to Christianity in that epoch. Mr. E. G. Hardy, in his valuable book *Christianity and the Roman Government* (London, 1894, p. 70), has pointed out that "the mode of punishment was that prescribed for those convicted of magic," and that Suetonius uses the term *maleſica* of the new religion—a term which has this special sense. Magicians, moreover, in the code of Justinian, which here as often reflects a much earlier age, are declared to be "enemies of the human race." Nor is it true that Nero's persecution as recorded in Tacitus is mentioned by no writer before Melito. It is practically certain that Clement, writing about A.D. 95, refers to it. He records that a πολὺ πλῆθος, or vast multitude of Christians, the *ingens multitudo* of Tacitus, perished in connection with the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. He speaks of the manifold insults and torments of men, the terrible and unholy outrages upon women, in terms that answer exactly to the two phrases of Tacitus: *pereuntibus addita ludibria* and *quaesitissimae poenae*. Women, he implies, were, "like Dirce, fastened on the horns of bulls, or, after figuring as Danaides in the arena, were exposed to the attacks of wild beasts" (Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 72).

Drews on Poggio's interpolations of Tacitus

However, Drews is not content with merely ousting the passage from Tacitus, but undertakes to explain to his readers how it got there. It was, he conjectures, made up out of a similar passage read in the

Chronicle of Sulpicius Severus (written about 407) by some clever forger, probably Poggio, who smuggled it into the text of Tacitus, "a writer whose text is full of interpolations." It is hardly necessary to inform an educated reader, firstly, that the text of Tacitus is recognized by all competent Latin scholars to be remarkably free from interpolations; secondly, that Severus merely abridged his account of Nero's persecution from the narrative he found in Tacitus, an author whom he frequently copied and imitated; thirdly, that Poggio, the supposed interpolator, lived in the fifteenth century, whereas our oldest MS. of this part of Tacitus is of the eleventh century; it is now in the Laurentian Library. I should advise Dr. Drews to stick to his javelin-man story, and not to venture on incursions into the field of classical philology.

Pliny's letter to Trajan

Having dispatched Josephus and Tacitus, and printed over their pages in capitals the titles *The Silence of Josephus* and *The Silence of Tacitus*, these authors, needless to say, have no difficulty with Pliny and Suetonius. The former, in his letter (No. 96) to Trajan, gives some particulars of the Christians of Bithynia, probably obtained from renegades. They asserted that the gist of their offence or error was that they were accustomed on a regularly recurring day to meet before dawn, and repeat in alternating chant among themselves a hymn to Christ as to a God; they also bound themselves by a holy oath not to commit any crime, neither theft, nor brigandage, nor adultery, and not to betray their word or deny a deposit when it was demanded. After this rite was over they had had the custom to break up their meeting, and to come together afresh later in the

day to partake of a meal, which, however, was of an ordinary and innocent kind.

In this repast we recognize the early eucharist at which Christians were commonly accused of devouring human flesh, as the Jews are accused by besotted fanatics of doing in Russia to-day, and by Mr. Robertson in ancient Jerusalem. Hence Pliny's proviso that the food they partook of was ordinary and innocent. The passage also shows that this eucharistic meal was not the earliest rite of the day, like the fasting communion of the modern Ritualist, but was held later in the day. Lastly, the qualification that they sang hymns to Christ *as to a God*, though to Pliny it conveyed no more than the phrase "as if to Apollo," or "as if to Aesculapius," clearly signifies that the person so honoured was or had been a human being. Had he been a Sun-god Saviour, the phrase would be hopelessly inept. This letter and Trajan's answer to it were penned about 110 A.D.

Of this letter Professor W. B. Smith writes (p. 252) that in it "there is no implication, not even the slightest, touching the purely human reality of the Christ or Jesus." Let us suppose the letter had referred to the cult of Augustus Cæsar, and that we read in it of people who, by way of honouring his memory, met on certain days and sang a hymn to Augustus *quasi deo*, "as to a God." We know that the members of a *college of Augustals* did so meet in most cities of the Roman Empire. Well, would Mr. Smith contend in such a case that the letter carried no implication, not even the slightest, touching the purely human reality of the Augustus or Cæsar? Of course he would not. If this letter were the sole

record in existence of early Christianity, we might perhaps hesitate about its implications; but it is in the characteristic Latin which no one, so far as we know, ever wrote, except the younger Pliny, and is accompanied by Trajan's answer, couched in an equally characteristic style. It is, moreover, but one link in a long chain, which as a whole attests and presupposes the reality of Jesus. Mr. Smith, however, does not seem quite sure of his ground, for in the next sentence he hints that after all Pliny's letter is not genuine. These writers are not the first to whom this letter has proved a *pons asinorum*. Semler began the attack on its genuineness in 1784; and others, who desired to eliminate all references to Christianity in early heathen writers, have, as J. B. Lightfoot has remarked (*Apostolic Fathers*, Pt. II, vol. i, p. 55), followed in his wake. Their objections do not merit serious refutation.

Evidence of Suetonius

There remains Suetonius, who in ch. xxv of his life of Claudius speaks of Messianic disturbances at Rome *impulsore Chresto*. Claudius reigned from 41–54, and the passage may possibly be an echo of the conflict, clearly delineated in Acts and Paulines between the Jews and the followers of the new Messiah.[1] Itacism or interchange of "*e*" and "*i*" being the commonest of corruptions in Greek and Latin MSS., we may fairly conjecture *Christo* in the source used by Suetonius, who wrote about the year 120. *Christo*, which means Messiah, is intelligible in relation to Jews, but not *Chresto;* and the two words were

[1] So in Acts xviii, 12, we read of faction fights in Corinth between the Jews and the followers of Jesus the Messiah; Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, who cared for none of the matters at issue between them, is a well-known personage, and an inscription has lately been discovered dating his tenure of Achaia in A.D. 52.

identical in pronunciation. Drews of course upholds *Chresto*, and in Tacitus would substitute for Christiani *Chrestiani;* for this there is indeed manuscript support, but it is gratuitous to argue as he does that the allusion is to Serapis or Osiris, who were called Chrestos "the good" by their votaries. He does not condescend to adduce any evidence to show that in that age or any other *Chrestos*, used absolutely, signified *Osiris or Serapis;* and there is no reason to suppose it ever had such a significance. He is on still more precarious ground when he surmises that Nero's victims at Rome were not followers of Christ, but of Serapis, and were called *Chrestiani* by the mob ironically, because of their vices. Here we begin to suspect that he is joking. Why should worshippers of Serapis have been regarded as specially vicious by the Roman mob? Jews and Christians were no doubt detested, because they could not join in any popular festivities or thanksgivings. But there was nothing to prevent votaries of Serapis or Osiris from doing so, nor is there any record of their being unpopular as a class.

In his life of Nero, Suetonius, amid a number of brief notices, apparently taken from some annalistic work, includes the following: "The Christians were visited with condign punishments—a race of men professing a new and *malefic* superstition." On this passage I have commented above (p. 161).

Origin of the name "Christian"

Characteristically enough, Dr. Drews assumes, without a shadow of argument, that the famous text in Acts which says that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians in Antioch is an interpolation. It stands in the way of his new thesis that the Roman people called the followers of Serapis—who was

Chrestos or "good"—*Chrestiani*, because they were precisely the contrary.[1] Tacitus does not say that Nero's victims were so called *because of* their vices. That is a gloss put on the text by Drews. We only learn (*a*) that they were hated by the mob for their vices, and (*b*) that the mob at that time called them Chrestiani. His use of the imperfect tense *appellabat* indicates that in his own day the same sect had come to be known under their proper appellation as Christiani. In A.D. 64, he implies, a Roman mob knew no better.

[1] Tacitus very likely wrote *Chrestiani*. He says the mob called them such, but adds that the author of the name was *Christ*, so implying that *Christianus* was the true form, and *Chrestianus* a popular malformation thereof. The Roman mob would be likely to deform a name they did not understand, just as a jack-tar turns Bellerophon into Billy Ruffian. Chrestos was a common name among oriental slaves, and a Roman mob would naturally assume that *Christos*, which they could not understand, was a form of it.

Chapter VI

THE ART OF CRITICISM

Let us pause here and try to frame some ideas of the methods of this new school which denies that Jesus ever lived:—

Repudiation by the partisans of non-historicity of Jesus regular historical method

Firstly, they are all agreed that the method they would apply to all other figures in ancient history—for example, to Apollonius—shall not be used in connection with Jesus. They carelessly deride "the attempt of historical theologians to reach the historical nucleus of the Gospels by purely philological means" (*The Witnesses*, p. 129). "The process," writes Mr. Robertson, "of testing the Synoptic Gospels down to an apparent nucleus of primitive narrative"....."this new position is one of retreat, and is not permanently tenable" (*Christianity and Mythology*, p. 284).

If this be so, we had better abolish our chairs of history at the universities, and give up teaching it in the schools; for, in the absence of the camera and gramophone, this method is the only one we can use. When a Mommsen sets Polybius's, Livy's, and Plutarch's lives of Hannibal side by side and "tests them down to an apparent nucleus of primitive narrative," does Mr. Robertson take him as a text for a disquisition on "the psychological Resistance to Evidence"? If not, why does he forbid us to take the score or so of independent memories and records of the career of Jesus which we have in ancient litera-

ture between the years A.D. 50 and 120, and to try to sift them down? Why, without any evidence, should we rush to the conclusion that the figure on whom they jointly converge was a Sun-god, solar myth, or vegetation sprite?

New Testament literature taken *en bloc*

Secondly, we may note how this disinclination to sift sources and test documents prompts them to take *en bloc* sources and documents which arose separately and in succession. Yet it is not simple laziness which dictates to them this short and easy method of dealing with ancient documents. Rather they have inherited it from the old-fashioned orthodox teachers of a hundred years ago, who, convinced of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, forbade us to estimate one passage as evidence more highly than another. All the verses of the Bible were on a level, as also all the incidents, and to argue that one event might have happened, but not another, was rank blasphemy. All were equally certain, for inspiration is not given by measure. Their mantle has fallen on Mr. Robertson and his friends. All or none is their method; but, whereas all was equally certain, now all is equally myth. "A document," says (p. 159) the excellent work by MM. Langlois and Seignobos which I cited above,

> (still more a literary work) is not all of a piece; it is composed of a great number of independent statements, any one of which may be intentionally or unintentionally false, while the others are *bonâ fide* and accurate.....It is not, therefore, enough to examine a document as a whole; each of the statements in it must be examined separately; *criticism* is impossible without *analysis*.

We have beautiful examples of such mixed criticism and analysis in the commentaries on the Synoptics of

Wellhausen and Loisy, both of them Freethinkers in the best sense of the word.

Incapacity of this school to understand evolution of Christian ideas,

I have given several minor examples of the obstinacy with which the three writers I am criticizing shut their eyes to the gradual evolution of Christian ideas; they exhibit the same perversity in respect of the great development of Christological thought already traceable in the New Testament.

Paul conceived of Jesus as a Jewish teacher elevated through his death and resurrection to the position of Messiah and Son of God. On earth he is still a merely human being, born naturally, and subject to the law —a weak man of flesh. Raised from the dead by the energy of the Spirit, he becomes future judge of mankind, and his gospel transcends all distinctions of Jew and Gentile, bondsman or free. In Mark he is still merely human; he is the son of Joseph and Mary, born and bred like their other sons and daughters. As a man he comes to John the Baptist, like others, to confess and repent of his sins, and wash them away in Jordan's holy stream. Not till then does the descent of the Spirit on him, as he goes up from the Jordan, confer a Messiahship on him, which his followers only recognize later on. Astounding miracles and prodigies, however, are already credited to him in this our earliest Gospel. In the non-Marcan document, or Q, so far as we can reconstruct it, he has become Messiah through baptism (supposing this section to have belonged to Q, and not to some other document used by Luke and Matthew); but few or no miracles[1] are as yet credited

[1] Mr. Robertson recognizes (p. 124), though without realizing how much it damages his theory, that the miracles of the Gospels are "visibly unknown to the Paulinists"—presumably the early churches addressed by Paul in his Epistle. Do we not here get a glimpse of an early stage of the story of Jesus before it was overlaid with

to him, and the document contained little except his teaching. His death has none of the importance assigned to it by Paul, and is not mentioned; his resurrection does not seem to have been heard of by the author of this document. In Matthew and Luke the figure before us is much the same as in Mark; but human traits, such as his mother's distrust of his mission, are effaced. We hear no more of his inability to heal those who did not believe in him, and we get in their early chapters hints of his miraculous birth. In John there is, indeed, no hint of such birth; but, on the other hand, the entire Gospel is here rewritten to suit a new conception of him as the divine, eternal *Logos*. Demonology tales are ruled out. His *rôle* as a Jewish Messiah, faithful to the law, has finally retired into the background, together with that tense expectation of the end of the world, of the final judgment and installation in Palestine of a renovated kingdom of David, which inspires the teaching and parables of the Synoptic Gospels, just as it inspired Philo, and the Apocalypse of the Fourth Esdras and other contemporary Jewish apocrypha.

especially in connection with the legend of Virgin Birth,

Now, in Mr. W. B. Smith's works this development of doctrine about Jesus, this succession of phases, is not only reversed, but, with singular perversity, turned upside down. Similarly, Mr. Robertson and Dr. Drews, in order to secure a favourable reception for their hypothesis that Jesus was a Sun-god, insist in the teeth of the evidence that the belief in the Virgin Birth was part and parcel of the earliest tradition. As a matter

miracles? Yet Mr. Robertson, in defiance of logic, argues that the absence of miraculous tales of Jesus in the Paulines confirms what he calls "the mythological argument."

of fact, it was comparatively late, as the heortology or history of the feasts of the Church shows. Of specially Christian feasts, the first was the Sunday, which commemorated every week the Resurrection, and the hope of the Parousia, or Second Coming. The next was the Epiphany, on January 6, commemorative of the baptism when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and conferred Messiahship.

This feast we cannot trace before the year 125 or 150, and then only among Basilidians; among Catholics hardly before 300. Just as the story of the Virgin Birth was the latest addition to evangelical tradition, so it was the latest of the dominical feasts; and not till 354 did it obtain separate recognition in Rome on December 25. Of the feast of the Annunciation and of the other feasts of the Virgin we first hear in the sixth and succeeding centuries. From this outline we can realize at how late a period the legend of the Virgin Birth influenced the mind of the Church at large; yet Mr. Robertson, to smooth the way for his "mythic" theory, pretends that it was the earliest of all Christian beliefs, and without a tittle of evidence invents a pre-Christian Saviour-Sun-god Joshua, born of a virgin, Miriam. The whole monstrous conception is a preposterous coinage of his brain, a figment unknown to anyone before himself and bristling with impossibilities. Witness the following passage (p. 284 of *Christianity and Mythology*), containing nearly as many baseless fancies as it contains words:—

> The one tenable historic hypothesis left to us at this stage is that of a preliminary Jesus "B.C.," a vague cult-founder such as the Jesus ben Pandira of the Talmud, put to death for (perhaps anti-Judaic) teachings now lost; round whose movement there

> might have gradually clustered the survivals of an ancient solar or other worship of a Babe Joshua son of Miriam.

Such is the gist of the speculations of Messrs. Drews and Robertson, as far removed from truth and reality as the Athanasian Creed and from sane criticism as the truculent buffooneries of the Futurists from genuine art.

We have more than once criticized this tendency of Mr. Robertson to insist on the primitiveness of the Virgin Birth legend. He urges it throughout his volume, although here and there he seems to see the truth, as, *e.g.*, on p. 189, where he remarks that "only the late Third Gospel tells the story" of Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem to be taxed, and "that the narrative in Matthew" was "added late to the original composition, which obviously began at what is now the third chapter." If the legend was part of the earliest tradition, why does it figure for the first time in the late Third Gospel and in a late addition to the first? In another passage he assures us that chapters i and ii of Luke are "a late fabulous introduction." Clearly, his view is that, just in proportion as any part of the Gospels is late, the tradition it contains must be early; and he it is who talks about "the methodless subjectivism" of Dr. Pfleiderer, who, he says, "like Matthew Arnold, accepts what he likes" (p. 450).

and in connection with Schmiedel's "Pillars"

The same inability to distinguish what is early from what is late is shown by Mr. Robertson in his criticism of Dr. Schmiedel's "pillars"—*i.e.*, the nine Gospel texts (seven of them in Mark)—"which cannot have been invented by believers in the godhood of Jesus, since they implicitly negate that godhood." Of these, one is Mark x, 17 *ff.*, where Jesus uses—to one who

had thrown himself at his feet with the words: "Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (*i.e.*, life in the kingdom to come)—the answer: "Why callest thou me good? No one is good, save one—to wit, God." Here many ancient sources intensify Jesus's refusal of a predicate which is God's alone; for they run: "Call thou me not good." This apart, the Second and Third Gospels may be said to agree in reading, "Good master," and, "Why callest thou me good?"

In Matthew, however (xix, 16), we read as follows: "Behold, one came to him and said: Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good," etc.

Now, it is a result of criticism universally accepted to-day that Matthew and Luke compiled their Gospels with Mark before them, and that any reading in which either of them agrees with Mark must be more original than the discrepant reading of a third. Here Matthew is the discrepant witness, and he has remodelled the text of Mark to suit the teaching which had established itself in the Church about A.D. 100 that Jesus was without sin. He accordingly makes Jesus reply as a Greek sophist might reply, and not as a Jewish rabbi; and, by omitting the predicate "good" before *teacher*, he turns the words, "One there is who is good," into nonsense. By adding it before "thing" he creates additional nonsense; for how could any but a *good* action merit eternal life? The epithet is here superfluous. Even then, if we were not sure on other grounds that the Marcan story is the only source of the Matthæan deformed text, we could be sure that it

was, because in Mark we have simplicity and good sense, whereas in Matthew we have neither. Mr. Robertson, on an earlier page, has, indeed, done lip-service to the truth that Mark presents us with the earliest form of evangelical tradition; but here he betrays the fact that he has not really understood the position, nor grasped the grounds (set forth by me in *Myth, Magic, and Morals*) on which it rests. For he is ready to sacrifice it the moment it makes havoc of his "mythological" argument, and writes (p. 443): "On the score of simple likelihood, which has the stronger claim? Surely the original text in Matthew."

Even if Matthew, Mark, and Luke were rival and independent texts, instead of the first and third being, as they demonstrably are, copies and paraphrases of Mark, the best—if not the only—criterion of originality would be such an agreement of two of them as Mark and Luke here present against Matthew. Mr. Robertson, with entire *ignoratio elenchi*, urges in favour of the originality of Matthew's variant the circumstance that the oldest MS. sources of that Gospel reproduce it. How could they fail to do so, supposing it to be due to the redactor or editor of Mark, who was traditionally, but falsely, identified with the apostle Matthew? If the reading of Mark be not original, how came Luke to copy it from him? The most obvious critical considerations are wasted on Mr. Robertson and his friends.

Schmiedel on the disbelief of Mary in her son

Dr. Schmiedel again draws attention to the narrative of how Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, was declared by his own household to be out of his senses, and of how, in consequence, his mother and brethren followed him in order to put him under restraint. The story offended the first and third

evangelists, and they partly omit it, partly obscure its drift. The fourth evangelist limits the disbelief to the brethren of Jesus. The whole narrative is in flagrant antagonism to the Birth stories in the early chapters of Matthew and Luke, and to the whole subsequent drift of Church tradition. Being gifted with common sense, Schmiedel argues that it must be true, because it could never have been invented. It, anyhow, makes for the historicity of Jesus. What has Mr. Robertson to say about it? He writes (p. 443): "Why should such a conception be more alien to Christian consciousness than, say, the story of the trial, scourging, and crucifixion?" Here he ignores the point at issue. In Christian tradition, whether early or late, it was not the mother and brethren of Jesus who tried and scourged and crucified him, but inimical Jews and pagans. The latter are at no time related to have received an announcement of his birth from an angel, as his mother was presently believed to have done. We have, therefore, every reason for averring that the conception or idea of his being flouted by his own mother and brethren was a thousand times more alien to Christian consciousness—at least, any time after A.D. 100—than that of his being flouted by a Sadducean priesthood and by Roman governors. Once the legend of the Virgin Birth had grown up, such a story could not have been either thought of or committed to writing in a Gospel. It is read in Mark, and must be what we call a bed-rock tradition. If Mr. Robertson cannot see that, he is hopeless. Did he not admit (p. 443) that it is "certainly an odd text," so revealing his inmost misgivings about it, we should think him so.

Jesus is not deified in the earliest documents, nor do they reveal a "cult" of him

The same vice of mixing up different phases of the Christian religion shows itself in the insistence of this school of critic that it was from the first a *cult* of a deified Jesus. Thus Mr. Smith writes (*Ecce Deus*) as follows (p. 6) :—

> We affirm that the worship of the one God under the name, aspect, or *person* of the Jesus, the Saviour, was the primitive and indefectible essence of the primitive teaching and propaganda.

On the contrary, in the two basal documents, Mark and Q, no such worship is discernible. Jesus first comes on the scene as the humble son of Joseph and Mary to repent of his sins and purge them away in Baptism; he next takes up the preaching of the imprisoned John, which was merely that Jews should repent of their sins because the kingdom of God, involving a dissolution of the existing social and political order, was at hand. This was no divine *rôle*, and he is represented not as God, but only as the servant of God; for such in the Aramaic dialect of that age was the connotation of the title "Son of God." In Mark there is no sign of his deification, not even in the transfiguration scene; for in that he is merely the human Messiah attended by Elias and Moses. From a hundred early *indicia* we know that in the Semitic-speaking churches of the East he remained a human figure for centuries; and the Syrian Father Aphraat, as late as 336 in Persia, is careful to explain in his homilies that Jesus was only divine as Moses was, or as human kings are. It was not till the religion was diffused in a pagan medium in which gods had children by mortal women that the gross deification of Jesus emerged. The purport of these basal documents, moreover, is not to deify

Jesus, but to establish as against the Jews that he was their promised Messiah and the central figure of the Messianic kingdom he preached. That figure, however, was never identified with Jehovah, but was only Jehovah's servant, anointed king and judge of Israel, restorer of Israel's damaged fortunes, fulfiller of her political ideals and hopes. Mr. Smith argues that Jesus was deified from the first because his name was so often invoked in exorcisms. He even makes the suggestion (p. 17) that the initial letter *J* of Jesus "must have powerfully suggested Jehovah to the Jewish consciousness." There is no evidence, and less likelihood, of any such thing. The name of Jesus was during his lifetime invoked against demons by exorcists who rejected his message; just as they used the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so they were ready to exploit his powerful name; but neither Jews nor Christians ever confounded with Jehovah the names or personalities they thus invoked; any Jew in virtue of his birth and breeding would have regarded such a confusion of a man with his God as flat blasphemy.

Worship of a slain God no part of the earliest Christianity

Messrs. Robertson and Drews similarly insist that Jesus was from the first worshipped as a slain God. In the Gospel documents there is no sign of anything of the sort. It was Paul who first diffused the idea that the crucified Jesus was a victim slain for the redemption of human sins. We already have Philo proclaiming that the just man is the ransom of the many, so that there is no need to go to pagan circles, no need to go outside the pale of Greek Jews, of whom Paul was one, for the origin of the idea. He probably found it even in the teaching of Gamaliel, in which he was brought up. Mark asks no more of

his readers than to attribute the Messiahship—a thoroughly human *rôle*—to his hero, Jesus of Nazareth. Nor does Matthew, who seeks at every turn to prove that the actions of Jesus reported by Mark were those which, according to the old prophets, a Messiah might be expected to perform. How can writers who end their record of Jesus by telling us how in the moment of death he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" realizing no doubt that all his expectations of the advent of God's kingdom were frustrated and set at naught; how, I say, can such writers have believed that Jesus was Jehovah? The idea is monstrous. The truth is these writers transport back into the first age of Christianity the ideas and beliefs of developed Catholicism, and are resolved that the first shall be last and the last first. They have no perspective, and no capacity for understanding the successive phases through which a primitive Messianism, at first thoroughly monotheistic and exclusively Jewish in outlook and ideals, gradually evolved itself, with the help of the Logos teaching, into the Athanasian cult of an eternal and consubstantial Son of God.

Abuse of the comparative method by this school of writers

Thirdly, these writers abuse the comparative method. Applied discreetly and rationally, this method helps us to trace myths and beliefs back to their homes and earlier forms. Thus M. Emmanuel Cosquin (in *Romania;* Paris, 1912) takes the story of the cat and the candle, and traces out its ramifications in the mediæval literature and modern folklore of Europe, and outside Europe, in the legends of the Pendjab, of Cashmir, Bengal, Ceylon, Tibet, Tunisia, Annam, and elsewhere. But the theme is always sufficiently like itself to be really recognizable in the

various folklore frames in which it is found encased. The old philologists saw in the most superficial resemblance of sound a reason for connecting words in different languages. They never asked themselves how a word got out of Hebrew, say, into Greek, or out of Greek into Mexican. Volumes were filled with these haphazard etymologies, and the idea of the classification of languages into great connected families only slowly made its way among us in the last century. I have pointed out that in regard to names Messrs. Drews and Robertson are still in this prephilological stage of inquiry; as regards myths or stories of incident, they are wholly immersed in it. They never trouble themselves to make sure that the stories they connect bear any real resemblance to one another. For example, what have the Zodiacal signs and the Apostles of Jesus in common except the number twelve? As if number was not the most superficial of attributes, the least characteristic and essential. The scene of the Gospel is laid in Judæa, where from remote antiquity the Jews had classed themselves in twelve tribes. Is it not more likely that this suggested the twelve missionaries sent out by Jesus to announce the coming kingdom than the twelve signs of the Zodiac? Even if the story of the Twelve be legendary, need we go outside Judaism for our explanation of its origin?

They fit anything on to anything no matter how ineptly,

What, again, have the three Maries in common with the Greek *Moirai* except the number three and a delusive community of sound? Yet Mr. Robertson insists that the three Maries at the tomb of Jesus were suggested by the *Moirai*, because these, "as goddesses of birth and death, naturally figured in many artistic presentations of religious death scenes." As a matter

of fact, the representation of the *Parcae* or Fates in connection with death is rare except on Roman sarcophagi, mostly of later date than the Gospel story. And when they are so found, they represent, not women bringing spices for the corpse or mourning for the dead, but the forces, often thought of as blind and therefore represented as veiled, which govern the events of the world, including birth, life and death. There was, therefore, nothing in the *Moirai* to suggest the three Maries at the tomb; nor is it credible that the Hebrew *Christists*, given as they must have been to monotheism and detesting all statuary, pagan or other, would have chosen their literary motives from such a source. Where could they see such statuary in or about Jerusalem? It is notorious that the very presence of a symbolic eagle used as a military standard was enough to create an *émeute* in Jerusalem. The scheme of the emperor Caligula or Caius to set up his statue in Jerusalem in 39–40 A.D. provoked a movement of revolt throughout Palestine, with which the Jews of Egypt and elsewhere were in full sympathy. A deputation headed by Philo of Alexandria went to Rome to supplicate the emperor not to goad the entire race to frenzy. In the magnificent statues which surrounded him on the Parthenon hill, Paul could see nothing but idols, monuments of an age of superstition and ignorance which God had mercifully overlooked.[1] The hostility of the Jews to all pagan art

and forget the innate hostility of Jews to Paganism

[1] It is true that this is from a speech put into Paul's mouth by the author of Acts; but Paul himself is no less emphatic in Romans i, 23, where of the Greeks he writes that, "though they knew God, they glorified him not as God.....Professing themselves wise, they were turned into fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of a corruptible man." Such were the feelings excited in Paul by a statue of Pheidias; how different from those it roused in his contemporary Dion, who wrote as follows of it:

and sculpture was as great as that of Mohammedans to-day. Yet Mr. Robertson asks us to believe (p. 327) that the Gospel myths, as he assumes them to be, are "evolved from scenes in pagan art." On the top of that we afterwards learn from him that it was the Jewish high priest with legalistic leanings that presided over the *Christists* or *Jesuists*. Imagine such a high priest's feelings when he beheld his "secret society" evolving their system under such an inspiration as Mr. Robertson outlines in the following canons of criticism:—

> As we have seen and shall see throughout this investigation, the Christian system is a patchwork of a hundred suggestions drawn from pagan art and ritual usage (p. 305).
>
> Christism borrowed myths of all kinds from paganism (p. xii).
>
> .....the whole Christian legend, in its present terminology, is demonstrably an adaptation of a mass of pre-Christian myths (p. 136).

What a budget of mutually destructive paradoxes; and to crown them all Mr. Robertson claims in his introduction (p. xxii) that the method of his treatise is

> in general more "positive," less a priori, more obedient to scientific canons than that of the previous critics .....who have reached similar anti-traditionalist results. It substitutes an anthropological basis, in terms of the concrete phenomena of mythology, for a pseudo-philosophical presupposition.

"Whoever among mortal men is most utterly toilworn in spirit, having drunk the cup of many sorrows and calamities, when he stands before this image must utterly forget all the terrors and woes of this mortal life." So strong was the prejudice of the Church (due exclusively to its Jewish origin) against plastic or pictorial art that Eusebius and Epiphanius condemned pictures of Christ as late as the fourth century, while the Eastern churches, even to-day, forbid statues of Jesus and of the Saints. Of the great gulf which separated Jew from Gentile on such points Mr. Robertson seems not to have the faintest notion.

Credulity attends hyper-criticism

Fourthly, it is essential to note the childish, all-embracing, and overwhelming credulity of these writers. To them applies in its full force the paragraph in which MM. Langlois and Seignobos describe the perils which beset hypercriticism (p. 131, *op. cit.*) :—

> The excess of criticism, just as much as the crudest ignorance, leads to error. It consists in the application of critical canons to cases outside their jurisdiction. It is related to criticism as logic-chopping is to logic. There are persons who scent enigmas everywhere, even where there are none. They take perfectly clear texts and subtilize on them till they make them doubtful, under the pretext of freeing them from imaginary corruptions. They discover traces of forgery in authentic documents. A strange state of mind! By constantly guarding against the instinct of credulity they come to suspect everything.

For these writers, in their anxiety to be original and new, see fit to discard every position that earlier historians, like Mommsen, Gibbon, Bury, Montefiore —not to mention Christian scholars—have accepted as beyond doubt. Their temper is that of the Bacon-Shakesperians; and the plainest, simplest, most straightforward texts figure in their imaginations as a laborious series of charades, rebuses, and cryptograms. That Jesus never existed is not really the final conclusion of their researches, but an initial unproved assumption. In order to get rid of him, they feign, without any evidence of it, a Jewish secret society under the patronage of the Jewish High Priest, that existed in Jerusalem well down into the Christian era. This society kept up the worship of an old Palestinian and Ephraimitic Sun-god and Saviour, named Joshua, son of a virgin, Miriam. Where is the proof that such a god was ever heard of

in ancient Palestine, either early or late, or that such a cult ever existed? There is none. It is the emptiest and wildest of hypotheses; yet we are asked to accept it in place of the historicity of Jesus. What, again, do we know of secret societies in Jerusalem? Josephus and Philo knew of none. For the Therapeutæ, far from affecting secrecy, were anxious to diffuse their discipline and lore even among the Hellenes, while the Essenes had nothing secret save the names of the angels they invoked in spells. They were a well-known sect, and so numerous that a gate of Jerusalem was called the Essene Gate, because they so often came in and went forth by it. Were the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Scribes, or the *Sicarii* or zealots, secret sects? We know they were not. But is it likely that a sect composed in the main of Jews, and patronized, as Mr. Robertson argues, by the High Priest, would have kept up in the very heart of monotheistic Judaism a cult of Sun-gods and Vegetation-spirits? Could they there have given themselves up to the study of pagan statuary, art, and ritual dramas? What possible connection is there between the naïve picture of Hebrew Messianism we have in the Synoptic Gospels and the hurly-burly, the tagrag and bobtail of pagan mythologies which Mr. Robertson and his henchman Drews rake together pell-mell in their pretentious volumes? How did all this paganism abut in a Messianic society which reverenced the Old Testament for its sacred scriptures, which for long frequented the Jewish Temple, took over the feasts and fasts of Judaism, modelled its prayers on those of the Synagogue, cherished in its eastern branches the practice of circumcision?

After hundreds of pages devoted to the task of

Mr. Robertson accepts the historicity of Jesus after all

evaporating Jesus into a Solar or Vegetation-god, and all the personages we meet in the Gospels into zodiacal signs or pagan demigods, Mr. Robertson, as we have noticed above, finds himself, after all, confronted with the same personages in Paul's Epistles. There they are too real even for Mr. Robertson to dissipate them into cloud-forms, and too numerous to be cut out wholesale. He feels that, if all Paul's allusions to the crucified Jesus are to be got rid of as interpolations, then no Pauline Epistles will remain. He cuts out, indeed, all he can, but there is a residuum of reality. To identify Paul's Jesus with the Jesus of the Gospels is too humdrum and obvious a course for him. So common-sense and commonplace a scheme does not suit his subtle intelligence; moreover, such an identification would upset the hundreds of pages in which he has proved that Jesus of Nazareth and all his accessories are literary symbols employed by the Jewish "Jesuists" to disguise their pagan art and myths. Accordingly, he asks us to believe that Paul's Jesus is a certain Jesus Ben Pandira, stoned to death a hundred years earlier. This Jesus is a vague figure fished up out of the Talmud; but, on examination, we found Mr. Robertson's choice of him as an alias for Paul's Jesus to be most unfortunate, for competent Talmudic scholars are agreed that Jesus Ben Pandira in the Talmud was no other than Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels. Jesus most unkindly insists on being in at his own death,[1] in spite of all Mr. Robertson can say or do; and his house of cards is crowned with the discovery that the apostles whom Paul knew—not

[1] I trust my readers will forgive my use of a fox-hunting phrase in so serious a context, but I cannot think of any other so apt.

being identical with the signs of the Zodiac, like those of the Gospels—were no other than the twelve apostles of the Jewish High Priest, and that they were the authors of the lately-discovered "Teaching of the Apostles." He is very contemptuous for other early Christian books which affect apostolic authorship in their titles, but falls a ready victim to the relatively late and anonymous editor of this "teaching," who to give it vogue entitled it "The Teaching of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles." "The Jesuist sect," he writes (p. 345), "founded on it the *Didaché*, the Christian myth of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus." Everywhere else in his books he has argued that the "myth" in question was founded on the signs of the Zodiac. Why give up at the eleventh hour the astral explanation for an utterly different one? I may add that in the body of the *Didaché* the Twelve are nowhere alluded to; that it must be a much later document than the Gospels and Paulines, since it quotes them in scores of passages; and that the interpolation of the title, with a reference to the Twelve Apostles, was a literary trick scarcely older than the fourth century, long before which age the Pauline account of the resurrection was cited by a score of Christian writers. Lastly, we are fain to inquire of Mr. Robertson with whom he identifies "the Lord" of the above title—with the Jewish High Priest, or with Jesus Ben Pandira, or with the Sun-God-Saviour Joshua.

Theory of interpolations

I have given many examples of the tendency of all these authors to condemn as an interpolation any text which contradicts their hypotheses. There is only one error worse than that of treating seriously documents which are no documents at all. It is that of

the man who cannot recognize documents when he has got them. It is well, of course, to weigh sources, and the critical investigation of authorship lies at the basis of all true history. But, as the authors above cited justly remark (p. 99) :—

> We must not abuse it. The extreme of distrust in these matters is almost as mischievous as the extreme of credulity. Père Hardouin, who attributed the works of Virgil and Horace to medieval monks, was every whit as ridiculous as the victim of Vrain-Lucas. It is an abuse of the methods of this species of criticism to apply them, as has been done, indiscriminately, for the mere pleasure of it. The bunglers who have used this species of criticism to brand as spurious perfectly genuine documents, such as the writings of Hroswitha, the *Ligurinus*, and the bull *unam sanctam*, or to establish imaginary filiations between certain annals, on the strength of superficial indications, would have discredited criticism before now, if that had been possible.

It is unhappily easier to discredit criticism in the realm of ecclesiastical than of secular history; and this school of writers are doing their best to harm the cause of true Rationalism. They only afford amusement to the obscurantists of orthodoxy, and render doubly difficult the task of those who seek to win people over to a common-sense and historical envisagement, unencumbered by tradition and superstition, of the problems of early Christianity.

Professor Smith's monotheistic cult

Lastly, it is a fact deserving of notice that the genesis of Christianity as these authors present it is much more mysterious and obscure than before. Their explanation needs explaining. What, we must ask, was the motive and end in view of the adherents of the pre-Christian Jesus or Joshua in writing the Gospels and bringing down their God to earth, so humanizing in a story their divine myth? Let Pro-

fessor W. B. Smith speak: "What was the essence, the central idea and active principle, of the cult itself?" Here he means the cult of the pre-Christian Christ that invented the Gospels and diffused them on the market place. "To this latter," he continues, "we answer directly and immediately: It was a *Protest against idolatry;* it was a *Crusade for monotheism.*"

And yet he cannot adduce a single text from the Gospels—not even from the Fourth—which betrays on the part of Jesus, their central figure, any such crusading spirit. Jesus everywhere assumes his hearers to be monotheists like himself—he speaks as a Jew to Jews—and perpetually reminds them of their Father in heaven. Thus Matt. vi, 8: "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of"; Matt. v, 48: "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

The monotheism of those who stood around the teacher is ever taken for granted by the evangelists, and in all the precepts of Jesus not one can be adduced that is aimed at the sins of polytheism and idolatry. His message lies in a far different region. It is the immediate advent of the Messianic kingdom, and the need of repentance ere it come. Only when Paul undertakes to bear this message to pagans outside the pale of Judaism do we get teaching directed against idolatry; and in his Epistles such precepts have a second place, the first being reserved to the preaching of the coming kingdom and of the redemption of the world by the merits of the crucified and risen Messiah, the man Jesus. Most of Paul's letters read as if those for whom he wrote them were already proselytes familiar with the Jewish scriptures.

His great Oriental cryptogram

Such is Mr. Smith's fundamental assumption, and it is baseless. On it he bases his next great hypothesis of "the primitive secrecy of the Jesus cult," which "was maintained in some measure for many years—for generations even" (p. 45). "Why," he asks, "was this Jesus cult originally secret, and expressed in such guarded parabolic terms as made it unintelligible to the multitude?" The reason lay in the fact that "it was exactly to save the pagan multitude from idolatry that Jesus came into the world" (p. 38).

Here the phrase "Jesus came into the world," like all else he did or suffered, is, of course, to be understood in a Pickwickian sense, for he never came into the world at all. The Gospels are not only a romance concocted by "such students of religion as the first Christians were" (p. 65), and inspired by their study of Plato,[1] and of the best elements in ancient mythology; they are a romance throughout—an allegory of a secret pre-Christian Nazarene society and of its secret cult (p. 34). Of this society, he tells us, we know nothing; esoterism and cult secrecy were its chief interests; the "silence of the Christians about it was intentional,"[2] and, except for the special revelation vouchsafed the other day to Professor W. B.

[1] P. 48. After citing the rather problematic allusion to Plato (Rep. ii, 361 D) in the apology of Apollonius (c. 172), the just man shall be tortured, he shall be spat on, and, last of all, he shall be crucified. Harnack has said that there is no other reference to this passage of Plato in old-Christian literature. "Why" asks Mr. Smith. "Because Christians were not familiar with it? Impossible. The silence of the Christians was intentional, and the reason is obvious. The passage was tell-tale. Similarly we are to understand their silence about the pre-Christian Nazarenes and many other lions that were safest when asleep." This is in the true vein of a Bacon-Shakespearian armed with his cypher.

[2] See note (1).

Smith, it would have remained for ever unknown, and Christianity for ever enigmatic.

In accordance with this postulate of esoterism and cult secrecy among the pre-Christian Nazarenes, who subsequently revealed themselves to the world as the Christian Church, though even then they "maintained for generations the secrecy[1] of their Jesus cult," the Gospels, as I said, are an allegory or a charade. Their *prima facie* meaning is never the true one, never more than symbolic of a moral and spiritual undersense such as old allegorists like Philo and Origen loved to discover in the Bible. Thus, as we saw above, when Jesus is reported to have cast out of the Jews who thronged around him devils of blindness, deafness, lameness, leprosy, death, what is really intended is that he argued pagans out of their polytheism. "It was spiritual maladies, and only spiritual, that he was healing" (p. 38). We ask of Mr. Smith, why was so much mystification necessary? We are only told that "it was in the main a prudential measure, well enough justified, but intended to be only temporary" (p. 39). What exact risks they were to shun which the sect kept itself secret, and only spake in far-fetched allegory, Mr. Smith does not inform us. Is he, too, afraid of being regarded as a "tell-tale" (p. 48)?

Professor Smith resolves all the New Testament as symbolic and allegorical

As with the exorcisms, so with all else told of Jesus. None of it really happened. As he never lived, so he never died. His human life and death are an allegory of the spiritual cult and mysteries which the pre-Christian Nazarenes and their

[1] Elsewhere Mr. Smith qualifies this position, p. 35: "Of course, the cult was not intended to remain, and did not in fact remain, secret; it was at length brought into the open." But perhaps Mr. Smith is here alluding to his own revelation.

descendants, the Christians, so jealously and for so long guarded in silence. If he never lived, then he never taught, not even in parables. By consequence the entire record of his parables, still more of his having chosen the parable as his medium of instruction in order to veil his real meaning from his audience, is all moonshine. Here, as elsewhere, the Gospel text does not mean what it says, but is itself only a Nazarene parable conveying, or rather concealing, a Nazarene secret—what sort of secret no one, save Professor Smith, the self-appointed revealer of their mysterious lore, can tell, and he is silent on the point. On Mr. Smith's premisses, then, we cannot rely on the Gospels to inform us of anything historical, and, so far as we can follow him, we must, if we would discern through them the mind of their Nazarene authors, take them upside down. We must discern a pagan medium and homilies against polytheism in discourses addressed to monotheistic Jews who needed no warnings against idolatry; we must also read the stories of Jesus healing paralytics and demoniacs as secret and disguised polemics against idolatry.

Yet claims, where it suits him, to treat it as historical narrative

But here mark Professor Smith's inconsistency. Why is he sure that the Nazarenes, and after them the earliest Christians, were a secret society with a secret cult? They must have been so, he argues, because Jesus taught in parables. "The primitive esoterism," he tells us, "is admittedly present in Mark iv, 11, 12, 33, 34." These verses begin thus: "And *he* said unto them, unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of heaven: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables."

Now, Mr. Smith's postulate is that *he*—*i.e.*, Jesus of Nazareth—never lived, and so never said anything

to anyone. How, then, can he appeal to what *he* said to prove that there was a pre-Christian Jesus or Joshua sect, itself secret with a cult and ritual which its members were ever on their guard not to reveal? Surely he drops here into two assumptions which he has discarded *ab initio:* first, that there is a core of real history in the Gospels; and, second, that the Gospel can mean what it says, and that its Nazarene author is here not allegorizing, as he usually did.

His theory contradicts itself

But even if we allow Mr. Smith to break with his premisses wherever he needs to do so in order to substantiate them, do these verses of Mark support his hypothesis of a sect which kept itself, its rites, and its teaching secret? I admit that it was pretty successful when it veiled its anti-idolatrous teaching under the outward form of demonological anecdotes, and wrote Jews when it meant Pagans and Polytheists. But in Mark iv, 34, we are told that "to his own disciples Jesus privately expounded all things" after he had with many parables spoken the word to such as "were able to hear it." It appears, then, that for all their love of secrecy, and in spite of all their precautions against "tell-tale" writing, the Nazarenes on occasions went out of their way, in their allegorical romance of their God Joshua, to inform all who may read it what their parables and allegories meant; for in it Jesus sits down and expounds to the reader over some twenty-four verses (verses 10–34) the inner meaning of the parables which he had just addressed to the multitude. What on earth were the Nazarenes doing to publish a Gospel like this, and so let the cat out of the bag? Instead of keeping their secret they were proclaiming it on the housetops. Again, if the Gospels are to

such an extent merely allegorical, that we must not assume their authors to have believed that Jesus ever lived, how can we possibly rely on them for information about such an obscure matter as a secret and esoteric pre-Christian Nazarene sect? We can only be sure that the evangelists never under any circumstances meant what they said; yet Mr. Smith, in defiance of all his postulates, writes, p. 40, as follows: "On the basis, then, of this passage alone [*i.e.*, Mark iv, 10–34] we may confidently affirm the primitive secrecy of the Jesus cult." Even if the passage rightly yielded the sense he tries to extort from it, how can we be sure that that sense is not, like the rest of the Gospel, an allegory of something else?

The other passage of the Gospels, Matthew x, 26, 27, to which, with like inconsistency, Mr. Smith appeals by way of showing that the Nazarenes of set purpose hid their light under a bushel, does not bear the interpretation he puts on it. It runs thus: "Fear them not therefore: for naught is covered that shall not be revealed, and hidden that shall not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye on the housetops; and what ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops."

Absence of esoterism about Jesus's teaching

The reasonable interpretation of the above is that Jesus, being in possession, as he thought, of a special understanding, perhaps revelation, of the true nature of the Messianic kingdom, and convinced of its near approach, instructed his immediate disciples in privacy concerning it in order that they might carry the message up and down the land to the children of Israel. He therefore exhorts them not to be silent from fear of the Jews, who accused him of being

possessed of a devil, somewhat as his own mother and brethren accused him of being an *exalté* and beside himself. No, they were to cast aside all apprehensions; they must go, not to the supercilious Pharisees or to the comfortable priests who battened on the people, still less to Gentiles and Samaritans, who had no part in the promises made to Israel, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and they must preach as they went, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. They were to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils, and in general give freely the good tidings which freely they had received from their Master, and he from John the Baptist. If they so acted, discarding all timidity, then no human repression, no human time-serving, could prevent the spread of the good news. What was now hidden from the poor and ignorant among his compatriots would henceforth, thanks to the courage and devotedness of his emissaries, be made known to them; what was now covered, be revealed.

Such is the context of "this remarkable deliverance," as Mr. Smith terms it; and nothing in all the New Testament savours less than it does of a secret cult of mysterious sectaries, waiting for Mr. Smith to manifest their *arcana* to us twenty centuries later. Here, as everywhere else in the New Testament, he has discovered a monstrous mare's nest; has banished the only possible and obvious interpretation, in order to substitute a chimera of his own.

It was not a protest against paganism

Mr. Smith credits his hypothetical pre-Christian Nazarenes with an ambition and anxiety to purge away the errors of mankind. The "essence, the central idea, and active principle of the cult itself,"

he tells us (p. 45), "was a *protest against Idolatry, a crusade for monotheism.*" "The fact of the primitive worship of Jesus and the fact of the primitive mission to all the Gentiles are the two cardinal facts of Proto-Christianity" (p. xvii). Why on earth, then, in concocting that pronunciamento of their cult which we call the Gospels, did these Nazarenes represent *the* Jesus or Joshua God, even in allegory, as warning his disciples on no account to disseminate his cult among Gentiles and Samaritans, but only among Jews, who were notoriously monotheists and bitterly hostile to every form of idolatry? Why carry coals to Newcastle on so huge a scale?

Why turn God Jeshua into a man at all

And granted that the Nazarenes, in their anxiety to be parabolical and misunderstood of their readers, wrote Jews when they meant Pagans, was it necessary in the interests of their monotheistic crusade to nickname their One God Jesus, to represent him as a man and a carpenter, with brothers and sisters, and a mother that did not believe in him; as a man who was a Jew with the prejudices of a Jew, a man circumcised and insisting that he came not to destroy the law of Moses, but to fulfil it; as a man who was born like other men of a human father and mother; was crucified, dead and buried; whose disciples and Galilean companions, when in the first flush of their grief they heard from Mary Magdalene the strange story of his first appearing to her after death, still "disbelieved"?[1]

The comfort of the initial "J"

These Nazarenes were, in their quality of "students of religion" (p. 65), intent on converting the world

[1] Mark xvi, 9. The circumstance that Mark xvi, 9–20, was added to the Gospel by another hand in no way diminishes the significance of the passage here adduced.

from polytheism. Why, then, did they call their sublime deity by the name of Jesus? "The word *Jesus* itself," writes Mr. Smith,

> also made special appeal to the Jewish consciousness, for it was practically identical with their own Jeshua, now understood by most to mean strictly Jah-help, but easily confounded with a similar J'shu'ah, meaning *Deliverance, Saviour, Witness*, Matthew i, 21. Moreover, the initial letter J, so often representing Jah in Hebrew words, must have powerfully suggested Jehovah to the Jewish consciousness.

But what Jew of the first century, however fond of the tales about Joshua which he read in his scriptures, was ever minded to substitute his name for that of Jehovah merely because it began with a *J* and has been explained by twentieth-century Hebraists as meaning *Jah-help?* The idea is exquisitely humorous. While they were about it why did the Nazarenes not adopt the name Immanuel, which in that allegorical romance (which from Mr. Smith we know to be the character of Matthew's Gospel) they fished up out of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah? If Jehovah was not good enough for them, Immanuel was surely better than the name Jeshua, with its associations of pillage and murder. But apart from these considerations, as the name *Jeshua* is Hebrew, it follows that the secret sectaries who had this cult must have been of a Jewish cast. But, if so, what Jew, we ask, ever heard of a God called Jeshua or Joshua? As I have already pointed out, the very memory of such a God, if there ever was one, perished long before the Book of Joshua could have been written. Like the gods Daoud and Joseph, with whom writers of this class seek to conjure our wits out of our heads, a god Joshua is a mere preposterous superfetation of a

disordered imagination. "There were abundant reasons," writes Mr. Smith (p. 16),

> why the name *Jesus* should be the Aaron's rod to swallow up all other designations. Its meaning, which was *felt* to be Saviour, was grand, comforting, uplifting. The notion of the world-Saviour thrust its roots into the loam of the remotest antiquity.

Supposed confusion of Jesus with *iēsomai*

One regrets to have to criticize such dithyrambic outpourings of Mr. Smith's heart. But, granted there was a widespread expectation, such as Suetonius records, of Messiahs who were to issue from Judæa and conquer all the world, who ever heard of the name Joshua being assigned in advance to one of them? Who ever in that age *felt* the name *Jesus* to be grand, comforting, uplifting? Is not Mr. Smith attributing his own feelings, as he sat in a Sunday school, to Jews and Gentiles of the first century? I add Gentiles, for he pretends that the name Jesus appealed to the Greek consciousness also as a derivative of the Ionic future Ἰήσομαι *iēsomai* = I will heal. Now what Christian writer ever made this *rapprochement?* Not a single one. Surely, if we are minded to argue the man Jesus out of existence, we ought to have a *vera causa* to put in his place, a belief, or, if we like it better, a myth which was really believed, and is known to have entered deeply into the lives and consciences of men? It is true that the idea of a Messiah did so enter, but not in the form in which Mr. Smith loves to conceive it. The Messiah was such a human figure as Suetonius had heard of; he was a man who should, as we read in Acts, restore the kingdom of David. "Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" is the question the apostles are said (Acts i, 7) to have

put to Jesus as soon as his apparitions before them had revived the Messianic hopes which his death had so woefully dashed. The incident is probably apocryphal, yet its presence in the narrative illustrates what a Messiah was then expected by Christians to achieve. Judas Maccabæus, Cyrus, Bar Cochba, Judas of Galilee—these and other heroes of Israel had the quality of Messiahs. They were all men, and not myths. The suggestion, then, that the name Jesus was one to conjure with is idle and baseless; and if his name had been Obadiah or Nathaniel, Professor Smith would have been equally ready to prove that these were attractive names, bound to triumph and "swallow up all other designations." He only pitches on the name of Jesus for his pre-Christian Saviour-god because he finds it in the Gospels; but inasmuch as he sees in them mere allegorical romances, entirely unhistorical and having no root in facts, there is no reason for adopting from them one name more than another. How does he know that the appellation Jesus is not as much of a Nazarene fiction as he holds every other name and person and incident to be which the Gospels contain? Is it not more probable that this highly secretive sect, with their horror of "tell-tale," would keep secret the name of their Saviour-god, as the Essenes kept secret the names of their patron angels? The truth is, even Mr. Smith cannot quite divest himself of the idea that there is some historical basis for the Gospels; otherwise he would not have turned to them for the name of his Saviour-god.

Mr. Smith denies all historicity to Acts and Epistles

More consistently, however, than Mr. Robertson, Professor Smith denies that there are any allusions to the real Jesus in the rest of the New Testament.

The Acts and Epistles do not, he says (p. 23), "recognize at all the *life of Jesus as a man*," though "their general tenour gives great value to the *death of Jesus as a God*." This is a new reading of the documents in question, for the Pauline conviction was that Jesus had been crucified and died *as a man*, and, being raised up from death by the Spirit, had been promoted to be, what he was antenatally, a superhuman or angelic figure[1]—a Christ or Messiah, who was to come again on earth and judge mankind. Of his mere humanity while on this earth, and as long as he was associating with human disciples, Paul entertained no doubts. How could he, inasmuch as he had stayed with them at Jerusalem? Mr.

[1] In the same manner, as we know from Origen (*Com. in Evang. Ioannis*, tom. xiii, 27), the Samaritans had a Messiah named Dositheos, who rose from the dead, and professed himself to be the Messiah of prophecy. His sect survived in the third century, as also his books, which, as Origen says, were full of "myth" about him to the effect that he had not tasted of death, but was somewhere or other still alive. By all the rules of criticism as used by Mr. Robertson and his friends, we must deny that Dositheos ever lived. The idea of a human hero being an angel or divine power made flesh was common among Jews, and in their apocryph, "The Prayer of Jacob" (see Origen, *op. cit.*, tom. ii, 25), that worthy represented himself as such in the very language of Paul and of the Fourth Gospel: "I who spoke to you, I, Jacob and Israel, am an angel of God and a primeval spirit, as Abraham and Isaak were created in advance of all creatures. But I, Jacob,.....called Israel by God, a man seeing God, because I am first-born of all living beings made alive by God." We also learn that Uriel was sent forth by God to herald Jacob's descent upon earth, where he "tabernacled among men." Jacob declares himself to be "archangel of the power of God, and arch-captain among the sons of God, Israel the foremost minister of the Presence." Paul, we observe, did not need to go outside Judaism for his conceptions of Jesus, nor Justin Martyr either, who regularly speaks of Jesus as an archangel. So also among the pagans. In Augustus Cæsar his contemporaries loved to detect one of the great gods of Olympus just descended to earth in the semblance of a man. He was the god Mercury or some other god incarnate. His birth was a god's descent to earth in order to expiate the sins of the Romans. Thus Horace, *Odes*, I, 2, v. 29: *Cui dabit partes scelus expiandi Juppiter*, and cp. v. 45: *Serus in cœlum redeas*—"Mayest thou be late in returning to heaven."

Robertson, as we saw, although he dissipates Jesus in the Gospels into a Sun-God-Saviour Joshua, nevertheless is so impressed by the Pauline "references to a crucified Jesus" (p. 364) that he resuscitates Jesus Ben Pandira out of the limbo of the Talmud. Perhaps he strains at a gnat after swallowing a camel. Anyhow, I will leave Mr. Smith to settle accounts with him, and turn to a fresh point, which has not occurred to either of them.

Contrast of Christian belief in Jesus with cult of Adonis or Osiris

It is this. Adonis and Osiris were never regarded by their votaries as having been human beings that had recently lived and died on the face of this earth. The Christians, in strong contrast with them and with all other pagans ever heard of, did so regard Jesus from first to last. Why so, when they knew that from the first he was a God and up in heaven? Why has the fact of his unreality, as these writers argue it, left no trace of itself in Christian tradition and literature? According to this new school of critics, the Nazarenes, when they wrote down the Gospels, knew perfectly well that Jesus was a figment, and had never lived at all. And yet we never get a hint that he was only a myth, and that the New Testament is a gigantic *fumisterie*. Why so? Why from the very first did the followers of Jesus entertain what Mr. Smith denounces as "an a priori concept of the Jesus" (p. 35)? Why, in other words, were they convinced from the beginning that he was a man of flesh and blood, who had lived on earth among them? The "early secrecy," the "esoterism of the primitive cult" (p. 39), says Mr. Smith, "was intended to be only temporary." If so, why could not the Nazarenes, primarily interested as they were, not in lies and bogus, but in disseminating their lofty monotheism, have thrown

off the disguise some time or other, and explained to their spiritual children that the intensely concrete life of Jesus which they had published in our Gospel of Mark meant nothing; that it was all an allegory, and no more, of a Saviour-god, who had never existed as a human being, nor even as the docetic phantasmagoria of the Gnostic? "Something sealed the lips of that (Nazarene) evangelist," and the Nazarenes have kept their secret so well through the ages that it has been reserved for Mr. Smith first to pierce the veil and unlock their mystery. He it is who has at last discovered that "in proto-Mark we behold the manifest God" (p. 24).

Now what possessed the Nazarenes so firmly to impose on the world through the Gospels an erroneous view of their God, that for 2,000 years not only their spiritual offspring, the Christians, but Jews and pagans as well, have believed him to have lived on earth, a man of flesh and blood and of like passions with themselves? Was the deception necessary? The votaries of Osiris and Adonis were never so tricked. The adherents of the Augustalian cult, the pious Greeks and Syrians who thronged to be healed of their diseases at the shrines of Apollonius, believed, of course, that their patron saints and gods had lived, prior to their apotheosis, upon earth; and so they had. But a follower of Osiris or Æsculapius would have opened his eyes wide with astonishment if you asked him to believe that his Saviour had died only the other day in Judæa. Not so a Christian; for the Nazarene monotheists had so thoroughly fooled him with their Gospels that he was ready to supply you with dates and pedigrees and all sorts of other details about his Saviour's personal history. And yet all the

time, had he only known it, his religion laboured under the same initial disadvantage as the cult of Osiris or Æsculapius—that, namely, of its founder never having lived at all. What, then, did "such students of religion, as the first Christians were" (*Ecce Deus*, p. 65), imagine was to be gained by hoodwinking their descendants for the long centuries which have intervened between them and the advent of Professor W. B. Smith ?

Chapter VII

DR. JENSEN

Babylonian influence on Greek religion slight;

The three writers whose views I have so far considered agree in denying that Jesus was a real historical personage; but their agreement extends no further, for the Jesus legend is the precipitate, according to Professor W. B. Smith, of a monotheistic propaganda; according to Mr. Robertson, of a movement mainly idolatrous, polytheistic, and pagan. There exists in Germany, however, a third school of denial, which sees in the Jesus story a duplicate of the ancient Babylonian Gilgamesch legend. The more extreme writers of this school have endeavoured to show that not only the Hebrews, but the Greeks as well, derived their religious myths and rites from ancient Babylon; and their general hypothesis has on that account been nicknamed *Pan-Babylonismus*. This is not the place to criticize the use made of old Babylonian mythology in explanation of old Greek religion, though I do well to point out that the best students of the latter—for example, Dr. Farnell—confine the indebtedness of the Greeks to very narrow limits.

on Hebrew religion more important;

The case of the Hebrew scriptures and religion stands on different ground; for the Jews were Semites, and their myths of creation and of the origin and early history of man are, by the admission even of orthodox divines of to-day, largely borrowed from the more ancient civilization of Babylon. Thus

Heinrich Zimmern (art. "Deluge," in *Encyclopædia Biblica*) writes: "Of all the parallel traditions of a deluge, the Babylonian is undeniably the most important, because the points of contact between it and the Hebrew story are so striking that the view of the dependence of one of the two on the other is directly suggested even to the most cautious of students."

yet a Jew may have possessed some imagination of his own

This undoubted occurrence of Babylonian myths in the Book of Genesis has provided some less critical and cautious cuneiform scholars with a clue, as they imagine, to the entire contents of the Bible from beginning to end. It is as if the Jews, all through their literary history of a thousand years, could not possibly have invented any myths of their own, still less have picked a few up elsewhere than in Babylon. Accordingly, in a volume of 1,030 enormous pages, P. Jensen has undertaken to show[1] that the New Testament, no less than the Old, was derived from this single well-spring. Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Jeroboam, Rehoboam, Hadad, Jacob and Esau, Saul, David and Jonathan, Joseph and his brethren, Potiphar, Rachel and Leah, Laban, Zipporah, Miriam sister of Moses, Dinah, Simeon and Levi, Jethro and the Gibeonites and Sichemites, Sarah and Hagar, Abraham and Isaac, Samson, Uriah and Nathan, Naboth, Elijah and Elisha, Naaman, Benhadad and Hazael, Gideon, Jerubbaal, Abimelech, Jephthah, Tobit, Jehu, and pretty well any other personage in the Old Testament, are duplicates, according to him, of Gilgamesch or his companion the shepherd Eabani (son of Ea), or of the Hierodule or sacred prostitute,

Gilgamesch, Eabani, and the holy harlot, protagonists of the entire Old Testament

[1] *Das Gilgamesch Epos in der Weltliteratur*, 1906.

and of a few more leading figures in the Babylonian epic. There is hardly a story in the whole of Jewish literature which is not, according to Jensen, an echo of the Gilgamesch legend; and every personage, every incident, is freely manipulated to make them fit this Procrustean bed. No combinations of elements separated in the Biblical texts, no separations of elements united therein, no recasting of the fabric of a narrative, no modifications of any kind, are so violent as to deter Dr. Jensen. At the top of every page is an abstract of its argument, usually of this type: "*Der Hirte Eabani, die Hierodule und Gilgamesch. Der Hirte Moses, sein Weib und Aaron.*" In other words, as Moses was one shepherd and Eabani another, Moses is no other than Eabani. As there is a sacred prostitute in the Gilgamesch story, and a wife in the legend of Moses, therefore wife and prostitute are one and the same. As Gilgamesch was companion of Eabani, and Aaron of Moses, therefore Aaron was an *alias* of Gilgamesch. Dr. Jensen is quite content with points of contact between the stories so few and slight as the above, and pursues this sort of loose argument over a thousand pages. Here is another such rubric: "Simson-Gilgamesch's Leiche und Saul-Gilgamesch's Gebeine wieder ausgegraben, Elisa-Gilgamesch's Grab geöffnet." In other words, Simson, or Samson, left a corpse behind him (who does not?); Saul's bones were piously looked after by the Jabeshites; Elisha's bones raised a dead Moabite by mere contact to fresh life. These three figures are, therefore, ultimately one, and that one is Gilgamesch; and their three stories, which have no discernible features in common, are so many disguises of the Gilgamesch epos.

But Dr. Jensen transcends himself in the New

Testament. "The Jesus-saga," he informs us (p. 933), "as it meets us in the Synoptic Gospels, and equally as it meets us in John's Gospel, stands out among all the other Gilgamesch Sagas which we have so far (*i.e.*, in the Old Testament) expounded, in that it not merely follows up the main body of the Saga with sundry fragments of it, like so many stragglers, but sets before us a long series of bits of it arranged in the original order almost undisturbed."[1] as also of the entire New Testament

And he waxes eloquent about the delusions and ignorance of Christians, who for 2,000 years have been erecting churches and cathedrals in honour of a Jesus of Nazareth, who all the time was a mere *alias* of Gilgamesch.

Let us, then, test some of the arguments by which this remarkable conclusion is reached. Let us begin with John the Baptist (p. 811). John was a prophet, who appeared east of the Jordan. So was Elias or Elijah. Elijah was a hairy man, and John wore a raiment of camel's-hair; both of them wore leather girdles. John—Eabani

Now, in the Gilgamesch story, Eabani is covered with hair all over his body (p. 579—"am ganzen Leibe mit Haaren bedeckt ist"). Eabani (p. 818) is a hairy man, and presumably was clad in skins ("ist ein haariger Mann und vermutlich mit Fellen bekleidet"). Dr. Jensen concludes from this that John and Elijah are both of them, equally and independently, duplicates or understudies of Eabani. It

[1] P. 933: "Die Jesus-sage nach den Synoptikern—wie auch die nach Johannes—unterscheidet sich nun aber von allen anderen bisher erörterten Gilgamesch-sagen dadurch, dass sie hinter dem Gros der Sage nicht nur einzelne Bruchstücke von ihr als Nachzügler bringt, sondern eine *lange Reihe von Stücken der Sage in fast ungestörter ursprünglicher Reihenfolge*," etc.

never occurs to him that in the desert camel's-hair was a handy material out of which to make a coat, as also leather to make girdles of, and that desert prophets in any story whatever would inevitably be represented as clad in such a manner. He has, indeed, heard of Jo. Weiss's suggestion that Luke had read the LXX, and modelled his picture of John the Baptist on Elijah; but he rejects the suggestion, for he feels—and rightly—that to make any such admissions must compromise his main theory, which is that the old Babylonian epic was the only source of the evangelists. No (he writes), John's girdle, like Elijah's, came straight out of the Saga ("wohl durch die Sage bedingt ist"). Nor (he adds) can Luke's story of Sarah and Zechariah be modelled on Old Testament examples, as critics have argued. On the contrary, it is a fresh reflex of Gilgamesch ("ein neuer Reflex"), an independent sidelight cast by the central Babylonian orb ("ein neues Seitenstück"), and is copied direct. We must not give in to the suggestion thrown out by modern critics that it is a later addition to the original evangelical tradition. Far from that being so, it must be regarded as an integral and original constituent in the Jesus-saga ("So wird man zugestehen müssen, dass sie keine Zugabe, sondern ein integrierender Urbestandteil der Jesus-sage ist").

Jesus—Gilgamesch

From this and many similar passages we realize that the view that Jesus never lived, but was a mere reflex of Gilgamesch, is not, in Jensen's mind, a conclusion to be proved, but a dogma assumed as the basis of all argument, a dogma to which we must adjust all our methods of inquiry. To admit any other sources of the Gospel story, let alone historical facts, would be to infringe the exclusive apriority, as

a source, of the Babylonian epic; and that is why we are not allowed to argue up to the latter, but only down from it. If for a moment he is ready to admit that Old Testament narrative coloured Luke's birth-story, and that (for example) the angel's visit in the first chapter of Luke was suggested by the thirteenth chapter of Judges, he speedily takes back the admission. Such an assumption is not necessary ("allein nötig ist ein solche Annahme nicht").

"So much," he writes (p. 818),

> of John's person alone. Let us now pursue the Jesus Saga further.
>
> In the Gilgamesch Epic it is related how the Hunter marched out to Eabani with the holy prostitute, how Eabani enjoyed her, and afterwards proceeded with her to Erech, where, directly or in his honour, a festival was held; how he there attached himself to Gilgamesch, and how kingly honours were by the latter awarded to him. We must by now in a general way assume on the part of our readers a knowledge of how these events meet us over again in the Sagas of the Old Testament. In the numerous Gilgamesch Sagas, then [of the Old Testament], we found again this rencounter with the holy prostitute. And yet we seek it in vain in the three first Gospels in the exact context where we should find it on the supposition that they must embody a Gilgamesch Saga—that is to say, immediately subsequent to John's emergence in the desert. Equally little do we find in this context any reflex of Eabani's entry into the city of Erech, all agog at the moment with a festival. On the other hand, we definitely find in its original position an echo of Gilgamesch's meeting with Eabani.[1]

[1] P. 818. So weit von Johannis Person allein. Verfolgen wir nun die Jesus-Sage weiter.

Im *Gilgamesch* Epos wird erzählt, wie zu Eabani in der Wüste der Jäger mit der Hierodule hinauszieht, wie *Eabani* ihrer habe geniesst, und dann mit ihr nach Erech kommt, wo grade oder ihm zu Ehre ein

Evangelists borrowed their saga from Gilgamesch epos alone

Let us pause a moment and take stock of the above. In the epic two heroes meet each other in a desert. John and Jesus also meet in a desert; therefore, so argues Jensen, John and Jesus are reproductions of the heroes in question, and neither of them ever lived. It matters nothing that neither John nor Jesus was a Nimrod. This encounter of Gilgamesch and Eabani was, as Jensen reminds us, the model of every Old Testament story in which two males happen to meet in a desert; therefore it must have been the model of the evangelists also when they concocted their story of John and Jesus meeting in the wilderness. But how about the prostitute; and how about the entry into Erech? How are these lacunæ of the Gospel story to be filled in? Jensen's solution is remarkable; he finds the encounter with the prostitute to have been the model on which the fourth evangelist contrived his story of Jesus's visit to Martha and Mary. For that evangelist, like the synoptical ones, had the Gilgamesch Saga stored all ready in his escritoire, and finding that his predecessors had omitted the prostitute he hastened to fill up the lacuna, and doubled her into Martha and Mary. In this and many other respects, so we are assured by Jensen, the fourth evangelist reproduces the

Fest gefeiert wird, wie er sich dort an *Gilgamesch* anschliesst und ihn durch Diesen königliche Ehren zuteil werden. Welche Metamorphosen diese Geschehnisse in den Sagen des alten Testaments erlebt haben, darf jetzt in der Hauptsache als bekannt vorausgesetzt werden. In zahlreichen *Gilgamesch*-Sagen fanden wir nun die Begegnung mit der Hierodule wieder. Aber vergeblich suchen wir sie dort in den drei ersten Evangelien, wo ihr Platz wäre, falls diese etwa eine *Gilgamesch*-Sage enthalten sollten, nämlich unmittelbar hinter Johannis Auftreten in der Wüste. Ebenso wenig finden wir an dieser Stelle etwa einen Reflex von Eabani's Einzug in das festlich erregte Erech. Wohl dagegen treffen wir an ursprünglicher Stelle ein Wiederhall von Gilgamesch's Begegnung mit *Eabani*.

Gilgamesch epic more fully and systematically than the other evangelists, and on that account we must assign to John's setting of the life of Christ a certain preference and priority. He is truer to the only source there was for any of it. The other lacuna of the Synoptic Gospels is the feasting in Erech and Eabani's entry amid general feasting into that city. The corresponding episode in the Gospels, we are assured, is the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, which the Fourth Gospel, again hitting the right nail on the head, sets at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, and not at its end. But what, we still ask, is the Gospel counterpart to the honours heaped by Gilgamesch on Eabani? How dull we are! "The baptism of Jesus by John must, apart from other considerations, have arisen out of the fact that Eabani, after his arrival at Gilgamesch's palace, is by him allotted kingly honours."[1]

So then Eabani, who as a hairy man was John the Baptist, is now, by a turn of Jensen's kaleidoscope, metamorphosed into Jesus, for it is John who did Jesus the honour of baptizing him. Conversely, Gilgamesch, who began as Jesus, is now suddenly turned into John. In fact, Jesus-Gilgamesch and John-Eabani have suddenly changed places with one another, in accordance, I suppose, with the rule of interpretation, somewhere laid down by Hugo Winckler, that in astral myths one hero is apt to swop with another, not only his stage properties, but his personality. But fresh surprises are in store for Jensen's readers.

[1] P. 820. Jesu Taufe durch Johannes wäre sonst auch daraus geworden, dass *Eabani*, nach dem er an Gilgamesch's Hof gelangt ist, durch Diesen Königlicher Ehren teilhaft wird.

Over scores of pages he has argued that John the Baptist is no other than Eabani, because he so faithfully fulfils over again the *rôle* of the Eabanis we meet with in the Old Testament. For example, according to Luke (i, 15, and vii, 33) John drinks no wine, and is, therefore, a Nazirean, who eschews wine and forbears to cut his hair. Therein he resembles Joseph-Eabani, and Simson-Eabani, and Samuel-Eabani, and also Absolom, who, as an Eabani, had at least an upper growth of hair. And as the Eabani of the Epic, with the long head-hair of a woman, drinks water along with the wild beasts in the desert, and as Eabani, in company with these beasts, feeds on grass and herbs alone, so, at any rate according to Luke, John ate no bread.[1]

Imagine the reader's consternation when, after these convincing demonstrations of John's identity with Eabani, and of his consequent non-historicity, he finds him a hundred pages later on altogether eliminated, as from the Gilgamesch Epic, so from the Gospel. For the difficulty suddenly arises before Dr. Jensen's mind that John the Baptist, being mentioned by Josephus, must after all have really lived; but if he lived, then he cannot have been a mere reflex of Eabani. Had he only consulted Dr. Drews's work on the *Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus* (English translation, p. 190), he would have known that "the John

[1] Nach Lukas (i, 15 and vii, 33) trinkt Johannes keinen Wein, ist also ein Nasiräer. der *keinen Wein trinkt* und *dessen Haar nicht gekürzt* wird, ebenso wie Joseph-*Eabani*, wie Simson als ein *Eabani*, wie Samuel-*Eabani*, wie Absolom als *Eabani* wenigstens einen *üppigen Haar*wuchs besitzt, und wie der Eabani des Epos, mit dem *langen Haupthaar* eines Weibes, in der Wüste mit den Tieren zusammen Wasser trinkt, und wie *Eabani* mit diesen Tieren zusammen nur *Gras* und *Krauter frisst*, so *isst* Johannes, nach Lukas wenigstens, kein Brot.

of the Gospels" is no other than "the Babylonian Oannes, Joannes, or Hanni, the curiously-shaped creature, half fish and half man, who, according to Berosus, was the first law-giver and inventor of letters and founder of civilization, and who rose every morning from the waves of the Red Sea in order to instruct men as to his real spiritual nature."

Why could not Dr. Jensen consult Dr. Drews "as to the real spiritual nature" of John the Baptist? Why not consult Mr. Robertson, who overwhelms Josephus's inconvenient testimony to the reality of John the Baptist (in 18 *Antiq.*, v, § 2) with the customary "suspicion of interpolation." Poor Dr. Jensen lacks their resourcefulness, and is able to discover no other way out of his *impasse* than to suppose that it was originally Lazarus and not John that had a place in his Gilgamesch Epic, and that some ill-natured editor of the Gospels, for reasons he alone can divine, everywhere struck out the name of Lazarus, and inserted in place of it that of John the Baptist, which he found in the works of Josephus. Such are the possibilities of Gospel redaction as Jensen understands them.

One more example of Dr. Jensen's system. In the Gospel, Jesus, finding himself on one occasion surrounded by a larger throng of people than was desirable, took a boat in order to get away from them, and passed across the lake on the shore of which he had been preaching and ministering to the sick. The incident is a commonplace one enough, but nothing is too slight and unimportant for Dr. Jensen to detect in it a Gilgamesch parallel, and accordingly he writes thus of it: "As for Xisuthros, so for Jesus, a boat is lying ready, and like Xisuthros and Jonas, Jesus

'flees' in a boat."[1] Xisuthros, I may remind the reader, is the name of the flood-hero in Berosus. Hardly a single one of the parallels which crowd the thousand pages of Dr. Jensen is less flimsy than the above. Without doing more violence to texts and to probabilities, one could prove that Achilles and Patroclus and Helen, Æneas and Achates and Dido, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and Dulcinea, were all of them so many understudies of Gilgamesch, Eabani and his temple slave; and we almost expect to find such a demonstration in his promised second volume.

I cannot but think that my readers will resent any further specimens of Dr. Jensen's system. He has not troubled himself to acquire the merest *a b c* of modern textual criticism. He has no sense of the differences of idea and style which divide the Fourth from the earlier Gospels, and he lacks all insight into the development of the Gospel tradition. He takes Christian documents out of their historical context, and ignores their dependence on the Judaism of the period B.C. 100 to A.D. 100. He has no understanding of the prophetic, Messianic and Apocalyptic aspects of early Christianity, no sense of its intimate relations with the beliefs and opinions which lie before us in apocryphs like the Book of Enoch, the Fourth Esdras, the Ascent of Isaiah, the Testaments of the Patriarchs. He has never learned that in the four Gospels he has before him successive stages or layers of stratification of Christian tradition, and he accordingly treats them as a single literary block, of which every part is of

[1] P. 838: Wie für Xisuthros, liegt für Jesus ein Schiff bereit, und, wie Xisuthros und Jonas, "flieht" Jesus in ein Schiff.

the same age and evidential value. Like his Gilgamesch Epic the Gospels, for all he knows about them, might have been dug up only yesterday among the sands of Mesopotamia, instead of being the work of a sect with which, as early as the end of the first century, we are fairly well acquainted. Never once does he ask himself how the authors of the New Testament came to have the Gilgamesch Epic at the tips of their tongues, exactly in the form in which he translates it from Babylonian tablets incised 2,000 years before Christ? By what channels did it reach them? Why were they at such pains to transform it into the story of a Galilean Messiah crucified by the Roman Governor of Judæa? And as Paul and Peter, like everyone else named in the book, are duplicates of Gilgamesch and Eabani, where are we to draw the line of intersection between heaven and earth; where fix the year in which the early Christians ceased to be myths and became mere men and women? This is a point it equally behoves Dr. Drews and Mr. Robertson and Professor W. B. Smith to clear up our doubts about.

EPILOGUE

Of the books passed in review in the preceding pages, as of several others couched in the same vein and recently published in England and Germany, perhaps the best that can be said is this, that, at any rate, they are untrammelled by orthodox prejudice, and fearlessly written. That they belong, so to speak, to the extreme left, explains the favour with which they are received by that section of the middle-class reading public which has conceived a desire to learn something of the origins of Christianity. Unschooled in the criticism of documents, such readers have learned in the school Bible-lesson and in the long hours of instruction in what is called Divinity, to regard the Bible as they regard no other collection of ancient writings. It is, as a rule, the only ancient book they ever opened. They have discovered that orthodoxy depends for its life on treating it as a book apart, not to be submitted to ordinary tests, not to be sifted and examined, as we have learned from Hume and Niebuhr, Gibbon and Grote, to sift ancient documents in general, rejecting *ab initio* the supernatural myths that are never absent from them. The acuter minds among the clergy themselves begin nowadays to realize that the battle of Freethought and Rationalism is won as far as the miracles of the Old Testament are concerned; but as regards those of the New they are for ever trying to close up their ranks and rally

their hosts afresh. Nevertheless, the man in the street has a shrewd suspicion that apologetics are so much special pleading, and that miracles cannot be eliminated from the Old and yet remain in the New Testament. He has never received any training in methods of historical research himself, and it is no easy thing to obtain; but he is clever enough to detect the evasions of apologists, and, with instinctive revulsion, turns away to writers who "go the whole hog" and argue for the most extreme positions, even to the length of asserting that the story of Jesus is a myth from beginning to end. Any narratives, he thinks, that have the germs of truth in them would not need the apologetic prefaces and commentaries, the humming and hawing, the specious arguments and wire-drawn distinctions of divines, any more than do Froissart or Clarendon or Herodotus. If the New Testament needs them, then it must be a mass of fable from end to end. Such is the impression which our modern apologists leave on the mind of the ordinary man.

I can imagine some of my readers objecting here that, whereas I have so rudely assailed the method of interpretation of New Testament documents adopted by the Nihilistic school—I only use this name as a convenient label for those who deny the historical reality of Jesus Christ—I nevertheless propound no rival method of my own. The truth is there is no abstract method of using documents relating to the past, and you cannot in advance lay down rules for doing so. You can only learn how to deal with them by practice, and it is one of the chief functions of any university or place of higher education to imbue students with historical method by setting before

them the original documents, and inspiring them to extract from them whatever solid results they can. A hundred years ago the better men in the college of Christchurch at Oxford were so trained by the dean, Cyril Jackson, who would set them the task of "preparing for examination the whole of Livy and Polybius, thoroughly read and studied in all their comparative bearings."[1] No better curriculum, indeed, could be devised for strengthening and developing the faculty of historical judgment; and the schools of *Literae Humaniores* and *Modern History*, which were subsequently established at Oxford, carried on the tradition of this enlightened educationalist. In them the student is brought face to face in the original dialects with the records of the past, and stimulated to "read and study them in their comparative bearings." One single branch of learning, however, has been treated apart in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and pursued along the lines of tradition and authority—I mean the study of Christian antiquities. The result has been deplorable. Intellectually-minded Englishmen have turned away from this field of history as from something tainted, and barely one of our great historians in a century deems it worthy of his notice. It has been left to parsons, to men who have never learned to swim, because they have never had enough courage to venture into deep water. As we sow, so we reap. The English Church is probably the most enlightened of the many sects that make up Christendom. Yet

[1] I cite an unfinished memoir of my grandfather, W. D. Conybeare, himself a pioneer of geology and no mean palæontologist, who owed much of his discernment in these fields to such a training in historical method as he describes.

what is the treatment which it accords to any member of itself who has the courage to dissociate himself from the "orthodoxy" of the fourth century, of those Greek Fathers (so-called) in whom the human intelligence sank to the nadir of fanaticism and futility? An example was recently seen in the case of the Rev. Mr. W. H. Thompson, a young theological tutor of Magdalen College in Oxford, who, animated by nothing but loyalty for the Church, recently liberated his soul about the miracles of the Gospels in a thoroughly scholarly book entitled *Miracles in the New Testament*. The attitude of the clergy in general towards a work of genuine research, which sets truth above traditional orthodoxy, was revealed in a conference of the clergy of the southern province, held soon after its publication on May 19, 1911. The following account of that meeting is taken from the *Guardian* of May 26, 1911:—

> The Rev. R. F. Bevan, in the Canterbury Diocesan Conference on May 19, 1911, proposed "that this Conference is of opinion that the clergy should make use of the light thrown on the Bible by modern criticism for the purposes of religious teaching." The Bishop of Croydon moved the following rider: "But desires to record its distrust of critics who, while holding office in the Church of Christ, propound views inconsistent with the doctrines laid down in the creeds of the Church."
>
> He said it was needful to define what was meant by modern criticism. He referred to a book which had been published quite lately by the Dean of Divinity of Magdalen College, Oxford, a review of which would be found in the *Guardian* of May 12. He must honestly confess he had not read the book for himself.....He then premised from the review that the work in question rejects the evidence both for the Virgin Birth of Christ and for his bodily

Resurrection from the tomb....., and added that the toleration by Churchmen of such doctrines and such views being taught within the bosom of the Church was to him most sad and inexplicable. If such was the instruction which young Divinity students were receiving at the universities, no wonder that the supply of candidates for ordination was falling off.

The Rev. J. O. Bevan said it was not in the power of any man or any body of men to ignore the Higher Criticism or to suppress it. It had "come to stay," and its influence for good or evil must be recognized.

The President (Archbishop of Canterbury) said that "Bible teaching ought to be given with a background of knowledge on the part of the teacher. He should deprecate as strongly as anybody that men who felt that they could not honestly continue to hold the Christian creeds should hold office in the Church of England. But he saw no connection between the sort of teaching which the Conference had now been considering and the giving up of the Christian creed. The Old Testament was a literature which had come down to them from ancient days. Modern investigation enabled them now to set the earlier stages of that literature in somewhat different surroundings from those in which they were set by their fathers and grandfathers." With regard to the book which had been referred to, the Archbishop said that, if the rider proposed was intended to imply a censure upon a particular writer, nothing would induce him to vote for it, inasmuch as he had not read the book, and knew nothing, at first hand, about it. He thought members ought to pause before they lightly gave votes which could be so interpreted.

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was carried with one dissentient. The rider was also carried by a majority.

It amounts, then, to this, that a rule of limited liability is to be observed in the investigation of early Christianity. You may be critical, but not up to the point of calling in question the Virgin Birth

or physical resurrection of Christ. The Bishop of Croydon opines that the free discussion of such questions in University circles intimidates young men from taking orders. If he lived in Oxford, he would know that it is the other way about.[1] If Mr. Thompson had been allowed to say what he thought, unmolested; if the Bishops of Winchester and of Oxford had not at once taken steps to silence and drive him out of the Church, students would have been better encouraged to enter the Anglican ministry, and the more intellectual of our young men would not avoid it as a profession hard to reconcile with truth and honesty and self-respect.

In the next number of the same journal (June 2, 1911) is recorded another example of how little our bishops are inclined to face a plain issue. It is contained in a paragraph headed thus:—

SYMBOLISM OF THE ASCENSION.

THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM ON THE SECOND COMING.

Preaching to a large congregation in Birmingham Cathedral.....the Bishop of Birmingham said that people had found difficulty in modern times about the Ascension, because, they said, "God's heaven is no more above our heads than under our feet." That was perfectly true. But there were certain ways of

[1] Within the last two months the theological faculties of Oxford and Cambridge, and the examining chaplains (of various bishops) resident in those universities, have addressed a petition to the Archbishop of Canterbury praying him to absolve candidates for Ordination of the necessity of avowing that "they believe unfeignedly in the whole of the Old and New Testaments," because so many competent and well-qualified students are thereby deterred from taking holy orders. The Archbishop would, it seems, make the individual clergyman's conscience the sole judge (to the exclusion of the Bishop of Croydon) of the propriety of his retaining his orders in spite of his rejection of this and that tradition or dogma. That is at least a sign that opinion is on the move.

> expressing moral ideas rooted in human thought, and we did not the less speak continually of the above and the below as expressing what was morally high and morally low, and we should go on doing so to the end. The ascension of Jesus Christ and his concealment in the clouds was a symbolical act, like all the acts after his Resurrection; it was to impress their minds with the truth of his mounting to the glory of God. Symbols were the best means of expressing the truth about things which lay outside their experience; and the Ascension symbolized Christ's mounting to the supreme state of power and glory, to the perfect vision of God, to the throne of all the world.....The Kingdom was coming—had to come at last—"on earth as it is in heaven"; and one day, just as his disciples saw him passing away out of their experience and sight, would they see him coming back into their experience and their sight, and into his perfected Kingdom of Humanity.

Now, I am sure that what people in modern times chiefly want to know about the Ascension is whether it really happened. Did Jesus in his physical body go up like a balloon before the eyes of the faithful, and disappear behind a cloud, or did he not? That is the plain issue, and Dr. Gore seems to avoid it. If he believes in such a miracle, why expatiate on the symbolism of all the acts of Jesus subsequent to his resurrection? Such a miracle was surely sufficient unto itself, and never needed our attention to be drawn to its symbolical aspects and import. Does he mean that the legend is no more than "a certain way of expressing moral ideas rooted in human thought"? May we welcome his insistence on its moral symbolism as a prelude to his abandonment of the literal truth of the tale? I hope so, for in not a few apologetic books published by divines during the last twenty-five years I have encountered a

tendency to expatiate on the moral significance of extinct Biblical legends. It is, as the Rev. Mr. Figgis expresses it, a way of "letting down the laity into the new positions of the Higher Criticism." Would it not be simpler, in the end, to tell people frankly that a legend is only a legend? They are not children in arms. Why is it accounted so terrible for a clergyman or minister of religion to express openly in the pulpit opinions he can hear in many academical lecture-rooms, and often entertains in the privacy of his study? When the Archbishop of Canterbury tells his brother-doctors that "modern investigation enables them now to set the earlier stages of Old Testament literature in somewhat different surroundings from those in which they were set by their fathers and grandfathers," he means that modern scholarship has emptied the Old Testament of its miraculous and supernatural legends. But the Anglican clergyman at ordination declares that he believes unfeignedly the whole of the Old and New Testaments. How can an Archbishop not dispense his clergy from belief in the New, when he is so ready to leave it to their individual consciences whether they will or will not believe in the Old? The entire position is hollow and illogical, and most of the bishops know it; but, instead of frankly recognizing facts, they descant upon the symbolical meaning of tales which they know they must openly abandon to-morrow. One is inclined to ask Dr. Gore why Christ could not have imparted in words to his followers the secret of his mounting to the supreme state of power and glory? Did they at the time, or afterwards, set any such interpretation on the story of his rising up from the ground like an airship or an exhalation? Of

course they did not. They thought the earth was a fixed, flat surface, and that, if you ascended through the several lower heavens, you would find yourself before a great white throne, on which sat, in Oriental state, among his winged cherubim, the Most High. They thought that Jesus consummated the hackneyed miracle of his ascension by sitting down on the right hand of this Heavenly Potentate. If Dr. Gore doubts this, let him consult the voluminous works of the early Fathers on the subject. The entire legend coheres with ancient, and not with modern, cosmogony. How can it possibly be defended to-day on grounds of symbolism, or on any other? The same criticism applies to the legend of the Virgin Birth. The Bishop of London is reduced to defending this thrum of ancient paganism by an appeal to the biological fact of parthenogenesis among insects. Imagine the mentality of a modern bishop who dreams that he is advancing the cause of true religion and sound learning by assimilating the birth of his Saviour to that of a rotifer or a flea!

The books of Dr. Drews and Mr. Robertson and others of their school are, no doubt, blundering extravaganzas, all the more inopportune because they provoke the gibes of Dr. Moulton; but they are at least works of Freethought. Their authors do not write with one eye on the truth and the other on the Pope in the Vatican, or on the obsolete dogmas of Byzantine speculation. It is possible, therefore, to discuss with them, as it is not with apologists, who take good care never to lay all their cards on the table, and of whom you cannot but feel, as the great historian Mommsen remarked, that they are chattering in chains (*ex vinculis sermocinantes*). In the

investigation of truth there can be no mental reserves, and argument is useless where the final appeal lies to a Pope or a creed. You cannot set your hand to the plough and then look back.

It was not, then, within the scope of this essay to try to determine how much and what particular incidents traditionally narrated of Jesus are credible. Such a task would require at least a thousand pages for its discharge; I have merely desired to show how difficult it is to prove a negative, and how much simpler it is to admit that Jesus really lived than to argue that he was a solar or other myth. The latter hypothesis, as expounded in these works, offends every principle of philology, of comparative mythology, and of textual criticism; it bristles with difficulties; and, if no better demonstration of it can be offered, it deserves to be summarily dismissed.

On the other hand, no absolute rules can be laid down a priori for the discerning in early Christian or in any other ancient documents of historical fact. But students embarking on a study of Christian origins will do well to lay to heart the aphorism of Renan (*Les Apôtres*, *Introd.* xxix), that "one can only ascertain the origin of any particular religion from the narratives or reports of those who believed therein; for it is only the sceptic who writes history *ad narrandum*." It is in the very nature of things human that we could not hope to obtain documents more evidential than the Gospels and *Acts*. It is a lucky chance that time has spared to us the Epistles of Paul as well, and the sparse notices of first-century congregations and personalities preserved in Josephus and in pagan writers. For during the first two or three generations of its existence the Church interested few

except itself. In the view of a Josephus, the Jewish converts could only figure as Jews gone astray after a false Messiah, just as the Gentile recruits were mere Judaizers, objects—as he remarks, *B. J.*, II, 18, 2—of equal suspicion to Syrian pagans and Jews alike, an ambiguous, neutral class, spared by the knife of the pagans, yet dreaded by the Jews as at heart aliens to their cause.[1] There were no folklorists or comparative religionists in those days watching for new cults to appear; and there could be little or no inclination to sit down and write history among enthusiasts who dreamed that the end of the world was close at hand, and believed themselves to be already living in the last days. For this is the conviction that colours the whole of the New Testament; and that it does so is a signal proof of the antiquity of much that the book contains. If a Christian of the first century ever took up his pen and wrote, it was not to hand down an objective narrative of events to a posterity whose existence he barely contemplated, but, as against unbelieving Jews, to establish from ancient prophecy his belief in Jesus as the promised Messiah, or perhaps as the Word of God made flesh. All Christians were aware that Jews, both in Judæa and of the Dispersion, roundly denied their Christ to have been anything better than an impostor and violator of the Law. They heard the pagans round them echoing the scoffs of their Messiah's own countrymen. Accordingly, the earliest literature of the Church, so far as it is not merely homiletic and hortative, is controver-

[1] Such is Renan's interpretation of this passage in *L'Ante-Christ*, ed. 1873, p. 259, and he is undoubtedly right in detecting in it a reference to the Christians scattered abroad in the half-Syrian and pagan, half-Jewish and monotheist, cities of Syria.

sial, and aims at proving that the Jewish people were mistaken in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. The Jews neither then nor now have fought with mere shadows; and just in proportion as they bore witness against his Messiahship, they bore witness in favour of his historical reality. It is a pity that the extreme negative school ignore this aspect of his rejection by the Jews.

Let me cite one more wise rule laid down by Renan in the same *Introduction*: "An ancient writing can help us to throw light, firstly, on the age in which it was composed, and, secondly, on the age which preceded its composition."

This indicates in a general fashion the use which historians should make of the New Testament. We have at every turn to ask ourselves what the circumstances its contents reveal presuppose in the immediate past in the way both of ideas or aspirations and of fact or incidents.

In conclusion, I cannot do better than quote the words in which Renan defines in general terms the sort of historical results we may hope to attain in the field of Christian origins. It is from the *Introduction* already cited, pp. vi and vii:—

> In histories like this, where the general outline (*ensemble*) alone is certain, and where nearly all the details lend themselves more or less to doubt by reason of the legendary character of the documents, hypothesis is indispensable. About ages of which we know nothing we cannot frame any hypothesis at all. To try to reconstitute a particular group of ancient statuary, which certainly once existed, but of which we have not even the debris, and about which we possess no written information, is to attempt an entirely arbitrary task. But to endeavour to recompose the friezes of the Parthenon from what remains

to us, using as subsidiary to our work ancient texts, drawings made in the seventeenth century, and availing ourselves of all sources of information; in a word, inspiring ourselves by the style of these inimitable fragments, and endeavouring to seize their soul and life—what more legitimate task than this? We cannot, indeed, after all, say that we have rediscovered the work of the ancient sculptor; nevertheless, we shall have done all that was possible in order to approximate thereto. Such a method is all the more legitimate in history, because language permits the use of dubitative moods of which marble admits not. There is nothing to prevent our setting before the reader a choice of different suppositions, and the author's conscience may be at rest as soon as he has set forth as certain what is certain, as probable what is probable, as possible what is possible. In those parts of the field where our footstep slides and slips between history and legend it is only the general effect that we must seek after.....Accomplished facts speak more plainly than any amount of biographic detail. We know very little of the peerless artists who created the *chefs d'œuvre* of Greek art. Yet these *chefs d'œuvre* tell us more of the personality of their authors and of the public which appreciated them than ever could do the most circumstantial narratives and the most authentic of texts.

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